

Saha, Niranjana (2014) Philosophy of Advaita Vedānta according to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's Gūḍhārthadīpikā. PhD Thesis. SOAS, University of London.

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**Philosophy of Advaita Vedānta according to
Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's *Gūḍhārthadīpikā***

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in the Study of
Religions

2014

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Declaration for PhD thesis

I have read and understood regulation 17.9 of the Regulations for students of the SOAS, University of London concerning plagiarism. I undertake that all the material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person. I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

Signed: Niraj Kumar Saha Date 22.10.2014

Acknowledgements

This undertaking has had a long gestation period. I first started thinking of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* for a PhD in 2005 at the University of Madras, under the supervision of Professor Godabarisha Mishra. The availability of a fellowship in 2007 for a PhD programme at the SOAS under the guidance of Professor Angelika Malinar made it possible for me to start working on it in earnest. I express my deep gratitude to both of them. However, my foremost gratitude goes to Dr L. K. Vimal with whom I recited the *Gītā* for the first time, and also read Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's *Siddhāntabindu* and *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*, during my field-study in New Delhi for training in reading Sanskrit language and texts. I am indebted to Dr Ramnath Jha, Special Centre for Sanskrit Studies, JNU, who taught me a few chapters of the text and helped me draw an outline of the work; and to Professor Shashiprabha Kumar for her help. My sincere gratitude goes to Pandit Goda Venkateshwara Sastri, Chennai, who read the first two chapters of the text with me before I left Chennai for the UK. I pay my obeisance to Svāmī Paramātmānanda whose lectures on Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya* I used to attend in Chennai. I am indebted to Professors R. Balasubramanian, N. Veezhinathan, S. Padmanabhan, Mandakranta Bose, K. M. Nair, A. K. Mohanty, Fr. Francis X. Clooney, Lance E. Nelson, John Grimes, Arindam Chakrabarti, M. M. Agrawal, Dilip Kumar Mohanta, Nirmalya Narayan Chakrabarti, Tapan Kumar Chakrabarti, Binod Agarwala, Drs Lokenath Chakrabarty, Sanjit Sadhukhna, Nirmalya Guha and G. Gayathripeetha for their guidance and help at various points of time. I am sincerely thankful to Professor Sanjukta Gupta Gombrich whose work on Madhusūdana had prompted me first to study this philosopher, and for her constant guidance and help. My sincere thanks are also due to Bhānu Svāmī, Dr. Vidyasankar Sundaresan, and an anonymous friend for their scholarly comments and guidance; and the latter two's help in editing the draft chapters.

As always, I cherish the blessings of all my early days' home tutors and the teachers of my Alma maters (Sripur Free Primary School; Habra High School; Barasat Govt. College, University of Calcutta; University of Madras).

My thanks are due to the Felix Trust which availed me a 3 year fellowship to pursue my programme at SOAS. I am also thankful to the International Students Welfare Advisors, SOAS; Churches' International Student Network, who granted me a financial help from their Hardship Fund to facilitate completion of the project in time when my original fellowship terminated in 2010. I am sincerely thankful to my supervisor Dr Theodore Proferes, but for whose adept guidance and friendly attitude it would not have been possible to submit the work for re-examination now, and who took charge of me midway after Professor Malinar left SOAS in 2009. My earnest gratitude goes to Dr Whitney Cox with whom we started reading texts initially. I also thank my friends, scholarship officer, library and other administrative staff for their co-operation I received at SOAS, and to Mr P. K. Chakrabarti, Mr and Mrs Boyce, Suchitra Dey in UK for their love and affection. M/s. Walter Newbury, the binder in London, deserves special thanks.

I am indebted to numerous friends (Debasish, Puran, Santhosh, Talim, Saurabh Sharma, Raviprabhat, Drs Surjakamal Bora, Devendra Singh, Kuldeep Shukla, R. Chandrasekar) who made me feel at home during my stay in New Delhi (2008-09). My deep sense of gratitude goes to Badrinath Tiwari who supplied me books whenever I demanded. My thanks are due to the staff of the libraries both in India and London for their kind co-operation. I convey my deep gratitude to all those whose translations and material I have made use of while preparing the work.

I have no word to express my gratitude to Professors P. K. Sen and Rina Sen for their parental concern, and moreover, for Professor Sen's remarks on the draft chapters that I prepared during the extended period for resubmitting this work. It is my fortune to have association with such a person who is a rare combination of scholarship and humanness. I express my gratitude to my Philosophy teacher at school Mr Durga Sankar Sen who not only introduced to me this subject, but also provided me his accommodation in Kolkata to stay during my research.

Last but not least, I am grateful to all my siblings, friends, cousin Subhasish, school-mates Subrata, Karuna etc. for their constant love and affection, and my beloved parents, late Shambhu Nath Saha and late Shobha Rani Saha, whose demise might have prompted me to undertake the study of the *Bhagavadgītā*. My life and education are my mother's gift. I dedicate this work to the memory of my late parents, the late Jugal Kishore Podder, my respected uncle; and the late professors in my college Saroj Nath Sanyal and Papri Bhadra, who would have been happy to see this work.

Abstract

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (ca. 16th century CE), one of the seminal figures in post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta, authored various works, including the *Advaitasiddhi*, a polemic of the highest kind against theistic dualism. It is considered to be one of the influential works of the Advaita Vedānta (i.e. non-dualism) school of Śaṅkara. In addition, his *Bhaktirasāyana* is the only extant independent exposition on the nature of devotion written by a staunch exponent of Advaita. In his work, we see a remarkable attempt to accommodate two apparently incompatible concepts, viz. non-dualism and devotion.

Building on the *Bhaktirasāyana*, Madhusūdana has given a running commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, viz. the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*, in which the doctrine of Advaita is expounded with a special emphasis on *bhakti*. In this work he occasionally disagrees with Śaṅkara's interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. He also treats some rival views that developed in post-Śaṅkara Vedānta (e.g. concerning whether the individual self is one or many) as viable alternatives within Advaita Vedānta.

While the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* is considered to be an original and independent commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* written from the Advaita point of view, some of the later commentators belonging to the same school did not accept it in toto. They even expressed the view that as compared to the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*, Śaṅkara's commentary exhibits better the true import of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Ironically, a few later commentators belonging to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava school (who are generally opposed to Advaita) have found the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* impressive. This dissertation attempts to establish that the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* succeeds to a considerable extent in

accommodating devotion as an aid to the means of attaining liberation, a fact that has been overlooked in some contemporary works on Madhusūdana.

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Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction:- Apart from the scope and methodology of this thesis and the principal questions that are addressed therein, the introductory chapter gives some general idea about the monastic lineage of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a chronological account of his principal works, the intellectual background of Advaita Vedānta, including the development of post-Śaṅkara schools, the commentarial tradition of the *Bhagavadgītā* before Madhusūdana and the available editions, commentaries and translations of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* together with its mutual references in other works of Madhusūdana, as also mutual references to other commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā* and a note to consider the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* as a perfect example of good exposition (*vyākhyā*).

Chapter 2: Available Modern Scholarship on Madhusūdana Sarasvatī:- A comprehensive review of the existing scholarly work regarding the works of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in general, and the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* in particular, is undertaken in the second chapter. The objective here is to identify the limits of previous scholarship on the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*, thereby justifying the need for undertaking the present venture.

Chapter 3: Madhusūdana's Introduction (*upodghāta*) to the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* as a Summary of the *Bhagavadgītā*:- This chapter aims at dealing critically and in more depth with the unique treatment of the *Bhagavadgītā* as laid down in the forty six

verses of the introduction to the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*, in order to determine what Madhusūdana focuses on throughout his long commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Chapter 4: Realities (*tattva*-s): the Supreme Self (*brahman*), the Individual Self (*jīva*), and the Universe (*jagat*):- In this chapter we discuss Madhusūdana's treatment of the three important doctrines of the Vedānta philosophy concerning the supreme self (*paramātmā*) or *brahman*, the individual self (*jīva*) and the cosmic universe (*jagat*), as well as his view of these principles as forming the metaphysical ground of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Chapter 5: Liberation (*mokṣa*) and the Means (*sādhana*) of Attaining It:- This chapter aims at exploring how Madhusūdana, with his distinctive philosophical approach, handles the state of liberation and the process of attaining it. The goal of this chapter is to show how Madhusūdana explains the *Bhagavadgītā* as a *śāstra* presenting a coherent philosophical teaching, leading to its ultimate goal of guiding seekers in the process of attaining liberation or emancipation (*mokṣa/mukti*).

Chapter 6: The *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* of Madhusūdana and the Commentarial Tradition of the *Bhagavadgītā*:- While Madhusūdana himself has referred to the views of many other commentators of the *Bhagavadgītā*, a number of subsequent commentators have also made use of Madhusūdana's *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* or adversely criticised it. A comparative analysis pertaining to the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* of Madhusūdana and other traditional commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā* will be

made in this chapter in order to assess what influence prior commentators had on Madhusūdana, and how subsequent commentators have reacted to him.

Chapter 7: Conclusion:- The concluding and seventh chapter makes a critical evaluation of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* on the basis of issues discussed in earlier chapters. The question of the ways in which Madhusūdana follows Śaṅkara's tradition, as compared to the way in which he innovates (i) in terms of interpretation of the text, (ii) in terms of authority used, and (iii) in terms of method of exposition will be reviewed in this chapter. Thus, this chapter will point out the fact that the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* makes a successful attempt to provide room for devotion as an aid to the means of attaining liberation, thereby indicating Madhusūdana's place within and influence upon the intellectual and religious discourse prevalent in India.

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (MS) (ca. 16th century CE) was a preeminent post-Śaṅkara Advaita thinker from Bengal.¹ An uncompromising defender of Śaṅkara's non-dualistic Vedānta with vast erudition and amazing polemical skills, MS produced works like *Advaitasiddhi* (*AdS*), *Siddhāntabindu* (*SB*) and *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* (*AdRR*). At the same time, his emphasis on devotion (*bhakti*) is especially noteworthy when compared to other exponents of non-dualistic Vedānta. This can be seen in works such as *Bhaktirasāyana* (*BhR*), *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* (*GD*), a commentary on the *Bhagvadgītā* (*BhG*), *Mahimnastotraṭīkā* (*MST*), *Bhāgavatapurāṇaprathamāślokaślokyā* (*BPPŚV*) and *Harilīlāvyākhyā* (*HLV*). Most of the avowed critics of Advaita, especially the Vaiṣṇavite founders of theistic Vedānta schools, including Rāmānuja (11th century CE), Madhva (13th century CE) and Vallabha (15th century CE), had already claimed that Advaita is incompatible with the sentiment of devotion, which entails a total surrender by the devotee to a personal Godhead like Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa or Hari, whom these thinkers identify with *brahman*. They also claim that the highest reality is *saguṇa brahman* (qualified *brahman*), and not *nirguṇa brahman* (unqualified *brahman*) as claimed by the Advaita Vedāntins. The *BhR* and *GD* vary greatly in subject-matter and approach, but in both texts, MS took up the challenging task of giving *bhakti* a prominent

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place within the fundamental tenets of non-dualism and renunciation that are the hallmark of the Advaita Vedānta. Thus, in order to evaluate his contribution to the debate on the place of *bhakti* in the Advaita Vedānta, the *GD* and *BhR* are the principal texts that should be studied intensively. The speciality of the *GD* is that here, unlike in his other devotional works, MS summarises the basic non-dualistic principles that are defended in detail in works like the *AdS* and *SB*. He also asserts in the *GD* and *AdS* that he knows no other higher reality but Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus, MS, while being an ardent follower of Śaṅkara, has formulated a remarkable synthesis of the paths of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*) and devotion (*bhakti-mārga*), for realizing the highest reality and attaining liberation, the highest end. Most scholars hold that MS's emphasis on *bhakti* is meant to counter the criticisms of theistic Vedāntins that adherents of the Advaita Vedānta cannot give a convincing account of the path of devotion recommended in the *BhG*. The current study has been undertaken with a view to examine how MS successfully combines the path of devotion with the basic tenets of the Advaita Vedānta in his commentary on the *BhG*, namely the *GD*.

MS begins the *GD* with a proclamation of allegiance to his great predecessor Śaṅkara, whose *BhG* commentary established the superiority of renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) and the path of knowledge. While in large measure endorsing Śaṅkara's views, MS uses subtle reasoning and copious scriptural citations to accommodate the path of *bhakti* within the Advaita tradition. At the same time, he resolutely defends the Advaita Vedānta from the attacks of Vyāsa Tīrtha (15th century CE), an adherent to Madhva's dualistic school of Vedānta. MS's strong allegiance to Advaita indicates that his ideas of *bhakti* are significantly different from those of theistic Vedāntins like Rāmānuja, Madhva and Caitanya (15th century

CE). Significantly, apart from Śaṃkara and his annotator Ānandagiri (14th century CE), the only other commentator whom MS refers to by name is Śrīdhara Svāmin (14th century CE). Though Śrīdhara adhered to Śaṃkara's non-dualism while describing the nature of reality (*tattva*) in the *BhG*, he admitted the superiority of devotion as a means to liberation, making his work acceptable to the Vaiṣṇava groups like the followers of Caitanya in Bengal.²

Thus, the principal question that will be addressed in this dissertation is: how does MS's commitment to *bhakti* in the *GD* influence the way he interprets basic Advaitic concepts and their interrelations? Several related issues will be studied in detail, including, (i) What is distinctive and unique about the interpretations provided by MS as compared to other commentators of the Advaita tradition? How successfully does MS achieve his objective of integrating the path of *bhakti* with the basic tenets of Advaita Vedānta? (ii) Does MS's attempt at incorporating *bhakti* in the larger Advaitic framework alter the traditional and popular understanding of Advaita? (iii) How does he utilise the works and thoughts of previous scholars, Advaitins as well as non-Advaitins, as he seeks to present a comprehensive and persuasive reading of the famous text of the *BhG*?

This task has been undertaken with occasional reference to the *Gūḍhārthatattvāloka* (*GTL*), a sub-commentary on the *GD* by Baccā Jhā (early 20th century CE) that has so far been neither studied nor translated. In explaining philosophical concepts in the main body of the thesis, references to the *BhG* commentaries of Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara will be made in order to trace

² In the *antyalīlā* of chapter seven of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛita*, Caitanya himself is said to have paid high regard to Śrīdhara Svāmin and his commentary on the *Bhāgavata* (Mukhopādhyāya 1997: p. 321).

MS's indebtedness to them, if and when it is found. In addition, mention will be made of the *BhG* commentators who have been cited by MS, either explicitly or implicitly, and later commentators who have referred to MS, in order to assess the importance of MS's own views in the wider tradition of *BhG* commentary. This study will review MS's philosophical stances in the *GD* in relation to his other works, as also the extent to which he is in agreement with Śaṃkara's positions as understood by the tradition. Thus, the present study will focus primarily on textual analysis, with minimal reliance upon historical or hagiographical accounts. The next section provides a brief biographical detail of the author in order to understand better the place of this text in its historical context and within the author's own *oeuvre*.

1.2. The author and his works

Like most writers from traditional Indian philosophical schools, MS has not given any significant autobiographical details in any of his works other than his name and the names of his preceptors, which appear in colophons and salutary verses. References to MS in later literature are the only sources upon which a biography of the author may be based, but these are often hagiographical in nature. Leaving aside these secondary references, we will depend here on the first-hand information available from the extant works of our author.

The fact that MS is the author of the *GD* can be substantiated with ample internal textual evidence. Apart from colophons at the end of each chapter, giving the name of the author, one of the concluding verses of the *GD* clearly mentions that the author of the *GD* is Madhusūdana and that he is a member of a monastic

order.³ The *Catalogus Catalogorum* of Theodor Aufrecht mentions nearly twenty authors named Madhusūdana. However, only one of them carries the ‘Sarasvatī’ suffix and is named as the author of a *Bhagavadgītāgūḍhārthadīpikā* among other works.⁴ In the *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, ten authors are named Madhusūdana, one of whom is also a ‘Sarasvatī’ and is identified as the author of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* and other works.⁵ Vasudev Shastri Abhyankar, in his introduction to a commentary on the *SB* of MS, mentions that twenty five authors in the history of Sanskrit literature are named Madhusūdana, and that five of them have ‘Sarasvatī’ affixed to their names. One of these is the author of the *Advaitasiddhi* and *Siddhāntabindu*, a disciple of Viśeśvara Sarasvatī and teacher of Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, who lived in the 17th century. This is the same as our author MS,⁶ whose *GD* forms the focus of this thesis.

That Śrīrāma, Viśveśvara and Mādhava are his preceptors, and that he belongs to the monastic order, are stated by MS at the beginning of his *AdS*.⁷ MS has dedicated both the *AdS* and *GD* to these three teachers, using almost the same expression in both works.⁸ The second benedictory verse of the *Samkṣepaśārīrakasārasaṃgraha* (SŚSS), which bears the name of the same three teachers, corresponds to the second benedictory verse of the *AdS* and the

³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, colophons at the end of each chapter and the 3rd concluding

verse at the end of chapter 18, p. 775.

⁴ Aufrecht 1962: Part 1, pp. 426-7.

⁵ Dash 2007: Vol. XVIII, pp. 148-51.

⁶ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: *Upodghātaḥ*, p. 27 (Also see Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. II).

⁷ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: Introductory verses 2 and 4 of chapter 1, p. 8.

⁸ Compare the last concluding verse at the end of the *GD* with the second introductory verse of the first chapter of the *AdS* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 775 and *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 8).

concluding verse of the *GD*.⁹ One of MS's commentators Brahmānanda Sarasvatī (17th century CE), while commenting on the second benedictory verse of the *AdS*, refers to Śrīrāma, Viśveśvara and Mādhava as MS's *parama-guru* (teacher's teacher), *guru* and *vidyā-guru* respectively.¹⁰

MS dedicates his *AdRR* to Viśveśvara Sarasvatī,¹¹ his preceptor, as attested in the colophons at the end of each chapter of his other works, including the *GD*, *SŚSS* and *SB*.¹² The beginning of the *SB*, the second introductory verse of the *Vedāntakalpātikā* (*VKL*) and the beginning and the colophon of the *MST*, all pay obeisance to Viśveśvara Sarasvatī.¹³ Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, while commenting on the *SB*, describes Viśveśvara as the preceptor of MS.¹⁴ At the third concluding verse of the *AdS*, MS salutes Mādhava Sarasvatī as among the finest self-controlled ones (*yamināṃ varāḥ*), with high proficiency in the scriptures (*śāstrārthe pariniṣṭhitāḥ*). In the course of commenting upon this verse, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī describes Mādhava Sarasvatī as MS's teacher of the *śāstra* (*vidyā-guru*), and, while explaining the fifth concluding verse of the same work, he refers to Viśveśvara Sarasvatī as MS's *guru*, i.e. preceptor.¹⁵ On the basis of these textual references, we can draw a *guru* lineage for MS that includes Śrīrāma, Viśveśvara and Mādhava Sarasvatī-s.¹⁶ Furthermore, as MS quotes Śaṅkara in several occasions throughout

⁹ Compare Giri 2007: Pt. 1, *Sārasaṃgraha*, p. 3 with *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 8 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 775 respectively.

¹⁰ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: *Gauḍabrahmānandī*, p. 8.

¹¹ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 46.

¹² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, colophons at the end of each chapter, and compare it with Giri 2007: Pts. 1 and 2, *Sārasaṃgraha*, colophons at the end of each chapter, pp. 803, 1132, 1614, and 1704; *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: Colophon, p. 46; *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 154.

¹³ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: Introductory verse, p. 1; Karmarkar 1962: p. 1; *Śivamahimnaḥstotra* 1996: *Madhusūdanī*, pp. 1 and 135.

¹⁴ Divānī 1933: Sanskrit section, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: 3rd concluding verse and *Gauḍabrahmānandī* thereon, p. 900.

¹⁶ Though the appellation 'Sarasvatī' is clearly found in the case of Viśveśvara Sarasvatī and Mādhava Sarasvatī in MS's own works, the same appellation may be appropriate in the case of

his commentary on the *BhG*¹⁷ to be an authority, his identity as a monk belonging to the Śaṅkarite tradition is confirmed.

Among the disciples of MS, we have already mentioned Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, who wrote a commentary on the *SB*, called the *Bindusandīpana*, wherein he pays homage to MS as his *vidyā-guru*, eulogising him as a Bṛhaspati, the preceptor of the gods.¹⁸ Puruṣottama also pays homage to MS in the concluding verses and colophon of the *Bindusandīpana*.¹⁹ In his commentary on the *Sarvasiddhāntarahasya* of Śaṅkara, Śeṣagovinda pays tribute to MS by describing him as one by whose grace the four goals of human life (*puruṣārtha-catuṣṭaya*) are attained, who is an incarnation of goddess Sarasvatī, and who has compassionately instructed him (Śeṣagovinda) [*karuṇā-pūrita-cetasopadiṣṭa*].²⁰ In the concluding verse of the *SB*, MS mentions that he has made this short composition for the sake of Balabhadra,²¹ who requested him earnestly. Brahmānanda Sarasvatī describes Balabhadra as a celibate disciple of MS,²² while Puruṣottama says Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya was a devoted disciple of MS, who was also well-versed in Vedāntic

Śrīrāma as well if we follow Brahmānanda Sarasvatī's view (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: *Gauḍabrahmānandī*, p. 8) that Śrīrāma, Viśveśvara and Mādhava were MS's *parama-guru*, *guru* and *vidyā-guru* respectively, which also finds support by the tradition that both the *guru* and *parama-guru* should be from the same *sampradāya*.

¹⁷ See chapter 6.2-3 *infra*.

¹⁸ Though Puruṣottama Sarasvatī is said to have written a commentary on MS's *AdS* as well, named the *Siddhisādhaka*, it is not extant (Divānī 1933: Sanskrit section, pp. 20 and 70).

¹⁹ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986a: *Bindusandīpana*, introductory verse 4, concluding verses 1 and 3, and colophon, pp. 2 and 146).

²⁰ Cf. Modi 1985: Introduction, footnote 11, p. 25, Ghoṣa 1931: *Advaitasiddhibhūmikā*, p. 109, Thangaswami 1980: p. 285.

²¹ Balabhadra also wrote a commentary on the *AdS*, called the *Siddhivyaṅkyā* which refutes the *Nyāyāmṛtataraṅginī* of Rāmatīrtha or Rāmācārya - 16th/17th century CE and the *Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa* of Śrīnivāsatīrtha - 13th century CE). Besides, he is said to have written the *Advaitasiddhisamgraha* (See *Nyāyāmṛtadvaitasiddhī* 1984 and Ghoṣa 1931: *Advaitasiddhibhūmikā*, p. 179).

²² *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: Last concluding verse and *Nyāyaratnāvalī* thereon, p. 462.

lore.²³ These textual sources help us determine the community of teachers and disciples of our author MS with some degree of certainty.

Despite the lack of concrete evidence regarding the precise date and biographical details of MS's life, it is safe to accept the general agreement of scholars that MS flourished in Bengal sometime between the 15th and 17th centuries.²⁴ As in the case of his biographical details, concrete details of other works of our author are uncertain. In the *Catalogus Catalogorum*, Theodor Aufrecht, has mentioned the following works under the heading of MS: *Advaitabrahmasiddhi*,²⁵ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa*, *Ātmabodhaṭīkā*, *Ānandamandākinī*, *Rgvedajaṭādyāṣṭavikṛitivivarāṇa*, *Kṛṣṇakutūhalanāṭaka*, *Prasthānabheda*, *Bhaktisāmānyanirūpaṇa*, *Bhagavadgītāguḍhārthadīpikā*, *Bhagavadbhaktirasāyana*, *Bhāgavatapurāṇaprathmaślokaṇyākhyā*, *Mahimnastotraṭīkā*, *Rājñāmpratibodha*, *Vedastutiṭīkā*, *Vedāntakalpalatikā*, *Śāṇḍilyasūtraṭīkā*, *Śāstrasiddhāntaleśaṭīkā*, *Śaṃkṣepaśārīrakasārasaṃgraha*, *Sarvavidyāsiddhāntavarṇaṇa* (*Prasthānabheda*?), *Siddhāntatattvabindu*, *Harilīlāvyākhyā*, and *Bhāgavatapurāṇādyaślokatrayavyākhyā*.²⁶

Though some of the works contain internal evidence suggesting identical authorship, it is difficult to accept all the works mentioned by Aufrecht as the works of the same author, and Aufrecht himself was doubtful about it. However, on the basis of primary evidence such as references to MS's teachers and/or to his name in

²³ Divānji 1933: Sanskrit section, p. 83.

²⁴ For a detailed and critical analysis of it, refer to Modi 1985: Introduction, Divānji 1933: Introduction, and chapter 2 *infra*.

²⁵ The first work mentioned in the list, called the *Advaitabrahmasiddhi* is probably the mistaken form of the *AdS* of MS. We find a separate work called the *Advaitabrahmasiddhi*, written by Kāśmīri Sadānanda Svāmin or Sadānanda Yati (17th century CE) [See also *Advaita-Brahmasiddhi* 1993].

²⁶ Aufrecht 1962: pp. 426-7 (See also Potter 1995: Vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 583-5; Dash 2007: Vol. XVIII, pp. 148-51; and Thangaswami 1980: pp. 286-8 for alternative lists).

the colophons and the internal references among these works, we can list the works of which MS's authorship is more likely.

The *Samkṣepaśārīraka* (*SŚ*) is a summary of the commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* (*BS*) of Śaṅkara by Sarvajñātmamuni (8th century CE) in versified form. Though MS's commentary on it, called the *SŚSS*, does not have any reference to any of his other works and none of his other works refer to it, this text can be placed among the works of our author on the grounds of other evidence we find in different works of MS.²⁷ Besides, the colophons at the end of each chapter of this commentary confirm MS's authorship.²⁸

The *VKL* is one of his earliest works, as it seems to have referred to no other work of MS but the *SB*.²⁹ Though his teacher is not named in the colophon of this work, there are expressions in it that are similar to expressions in his other works, which authenticate its authorship by MS.³⁰ The *SB* is a commentary by MS on the *Daśaślokī* of Śaṅkara. This is also called the *Cidānandadaśaślokī*.³¹ The reason for undertaking this work has been mentioned by the author himself at the end. The colophon also mentions MS's authorship and there are references to the *VKL* in it.³²

The *AdS* is considered to be the *magnum opus* of MS. Its authorship can easily be ascertained by the colophon of each of the four chapters, which runs 'Thus ends the ...in the *Advaitasiddhi*, composed by the renowned Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a disciple at the illustrious feet of the renowned Viśveśvara Sarasvatī, a

²⁷ Refer to the notes on MS's teachers' lineage in this section above.

²⁸ Giri 2007: Pts. 1 and 2, *Sārasaṃgraha*, pp. 803, 1132, 1614, and 1704.

²⁹ Karmarkar 1962: p. 164.

³⁰ Divānī 1933: Introduction, p. vi (Also see colophons of his *AdS*, *GD* etc. along with the colophon of the *VKL* - Karmarkar 1962: p. 176).

³¹ Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 33.

³² *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: Last concluding verse, pp. 154, 133, 141.

peripatetic teacher of the highest order of monkhood.’³³ It refers to other works of the author like the *GD*, *SB*, and the *VKL*.³⁴ The *AdRR*, like the *AdS*, is a dialectical work containing twenty different topics and is intended as a refutation of the Naiyāyika Śaṃkara Miśra’s *Bhedaratna* (1442 -1542 CE).³⁵ Its authorship can be attributed to MS from its reference to his other works like the *AdS*, *VKL*, and the *SB*.³⁶

MS also wrote a number of devotional works. The *MST* is a commentary on the *Mahimnastotra* of Puṣpadantācārya, which is apparently a eulogy of Lord Śiva (Hara). Being an ardent devotee of Lord Viṣṇu (Hari) MS, interpreted the original verse to praise both Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu. The colophon at the end of the work supports MS’s authorship of it. Moreover, the *VKL*³⁷ is referred to in this work. The colophon of each of the three divisions of the *BhR* confirms the authorship of MS.³⁸ Besides this, the work refers to the *SB* and *VKL*.³⁹

The colophons at the end of each chapter of the *GD* stating that its author is MS contain almost the same wording as those of the chapters of his *SŚSS*, *AdRR* and *SB*.⁴⁰ Moreover, his commentary on the *Gītā* (i.e. the *GD*) refers to his other works

³³ *iti śrīmatparamahamṣaparivṛajakācāryaśrīviśveśvarasarasvatīśrīcaraṇaśiṣya śrīmadhusūdanasarasvatīviracitayām advaitasiddhau* (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: Colophons of each of four chapters).

³⁴ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 750 (The same verse is also found as the first concluding verse of chapters 15 and 18 of his *BhG* commentary, *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 632 and 775); pp. 490, 537, 546, and 579 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 34); and pp. 524, 537, 678, and 866 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 8).

³⁵ *Bhedaratna* 2003.

³⁶ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: pp. 24, 26, 28, 37, and 44 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 54).

³⁷ *Śivamahimnastotra* 1996: *Madhusūdanī*, colophon at the end of the text, p. 135; *Madhusūdanī*, pp. 103 and 107 (Also see Divānī 1933: Introduction, p. VIII).

³⁸ Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era and Pāṇḍeya 1998.

³⁹ Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.24, p. 43; *BhR* 1.19, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Compare *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: Colophon of each chapter on *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* with Giri 2007: Pts. 1-2. pp. 807, 1132, 1614, and 1704; *Advaitaranarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 46; *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 154 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 8).

like the *SB*,⁴¹ *BhR*,⁴² and *AdS*.⁴³ Like the *GD*, the *BPPŚV*, a commentary on only the first verse of the *BP*, is another theological work of MS. The only work of MS referred to here is the *BhR*. The colophon at the end of the text also attributes its authorship to MS.⁴⁴ The *HLV* is a commentary on the *Harilīlāmṛta*, a summary of the *BP* by Vopadeva (13th century CE). In this work, there is only reference to his *BPPŚV* (the *Paramahaṃsapriyā*).⁴⁵ There is no reference to any of his teachers in this work, but the colophons of all its twelve chapters name MS as the author.⁴⁶

Among the works to which authenticity of authorship of MS is less certain, the following may be referred to. The *Ānandamanākinī* (*ĀM*) is a work praising Lord Kṛṣṇa and is composed on the legends as depicted in the *BP*. The last two verses of the work bear the title and the name of its author. There is no reference to this work in any other work of MS and vice versa, nor does it refer to any of his teachers referred to in his other major works. The colophon of the *ĀM* also is distinctly different from those of his other works, though it is stated that MS is the author.⁴⁷

The *Īśvarapratipattiprakāśa* (*ĪPP*) is a short text with a summary of various theories of God both in the orthodox and heterodox schools. There is no mention of any of the teachers of our author in the *ĪPP*, nor does it have any of common

⁴¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* on *BhG* 2.18, p. 64 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, footnote 41, p. 49).

⁴² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* on *BhG* 7.16, 18.65, and 18.66; pp. 363, 751, and 754.

⁴³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* on *BhG* 2.16, 2.18, and 5.16; pp. 59, 64, and 263.

⁴⁴ *Harilīlāmṛta* 1933: *Paramahaṃsapriyā*, p. 73.

⁴⁵ *Harilīlāmṛta* 1933: *Harilīlāmṛte prathamaskandhakathāsāraḥ* 3, p. 2.

While P. C. Devān̄ji (Devān̄ji 1933: Introduction, pp. VIII-IX) is doubtful about its authorship, and P. M. Modi (Modi 1985: Introduction, pp. 14, 37-8) deems it the work of MS; Sanjukta Gupta (Gupta 2006: p. 9) holds it to be one composed by our author and says that the author refers to his commentary on the 1st verse of the *Bhāgavata* in this work too.

⁴⁶ *Harilīlāmṛta* 1933: *Harilīlāmṛta* (The work is divided into twelve chapters corresponding to those of the *BP*).

⁴⁷ *Kāvyaṃālā* 1987: *Ānandamandākinī* 101-2 and colophon, p. 154 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 31).

colophons we find in his other works, excepting that MS is the author of the work.⁴⁸ The *Bhāgavatapurāṇādyaślokatrayavyākhyā* (*BPĀŚTV*), that is, a commentary on the first three verses of the *BP* is also said to have written by MS. Unlike the *BPPŚV*, MS's commentary on the second and third verse of the *BP* does not refer to any of his other works, but his own name occurs at the colophon of the work.⁴⁹ The *Kṛṣṇakutūhalanāṭaka* (*KKN*) is a devotional work written in the form of a dialogue (drama) in seven acts. It has no reference to any of his other works, nor does it mention any of his teachers known to us. It is mentioned in the colophon that the illustrious monk MS is the author of the work.⁵⁰

In summary, based on internal textual references, we find that the *VKL* and *SB* refer to each other; the *BhR* refers to both the *SB* and *VKL*; the *MST* refers to the *VKL*; the *BPPŚV* refers to the *BhR* and the *HLV* refers to the *BPPŚV*. The *magnum opus*, the *AdS* refers to the *SB*, *VKL* and *GD*; while the *GD* refers to the *SB*, *BhR*, and *AdS*. Finally, the *AdRR* refers to the *AdS* and *VKL*. We may therefore tentatively arrange MS's major works chronologically as, the *SŚSS*, *VKL*, *SB*, *AdS*, *GD* and the *AdRR*. Other texts, i.e. the *MST*, *BhR*, *BPPŚV* and the *HLV* were composed after the *VKL* and *SB*.

⁴⁸ *Īśvarapratipattiprakāśa* 1921: Colophon, p. 10.

⁴⁹ *Bhāgavata* 1815 Śakābda: Colophon, p. 20 (This printed version contains the author's commentary on the first three verses of the *Bhāgavata* with a clear colophon like those in his other works). P. C. Divānji and P. M. Modi think that, as it is stated at the end of the *BPPŚV* that all the varieties of emotional sentiment of devotion has also been mentioned in the *BhR* and that some of them will be dealt with here also, it seems that the author had the intention to write a commentary either on the whole work or on a greater part of it than on only one verse of the same (*Harilīlāmṛta* 1933: *Paramahaṃsapriyā*, p. 73) [Also see Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. VI and Modi 1985: Introduction, pp. 44-5].

⁵⁰ *Kṛṣṇakutūhala* 1990: Colophon at the end of the seventh act, p. 146.

1.3. Vedānta with special reference to Advaita and its post-Śaṅkara development

The Vedānta is an orthodox (*āstika*)⁵¹ philosophical school in Indian philosophy. The etymological derivation of the word *vedānta* is *veda* (the Vedas) + *anta* (end), and thus refers to the concluding part of the Vedas (ca. 1500 – 500 BCE), i.e., the Upaniṣads.⁵² By extension, the word *vedānta* has come to refer to the philosophy of the Upaniṣads⁵³ and, more particularly, to the methodological study of the Upaniṣadic teaching. Again, the word *mīmāṃsā* is understood as meaning the critical examination of statements of sacred texts that are objects of veneration (*pūjītavacanavicāraḥ mīmāṃsā*).⁵⁴

According to tradition, the discipline of Mīmāṃsā is effectively divided into two schools, the Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Uttaramīmāṃsā. The former, also called the Karmamīmāṃsā, Dharmamīmāṃsā, or, simply Mīmāṃsā, concerns itself with the portion of the Veda (*karma-kāṇḍa*) dealing with rituals and is associated with Jaimini (2nd century BCE). The latter, also called the Śārīrakamīmāṃsā, Jñānamīmāṃsā, Brahmanmīmāṃsā or Vedānta, concerns itself with the portion of the Veda dealing with soteriological knowledge (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*), particularly the knowledge of *brahman*,⁵⁵ and is associated with Bādarāyaṇa (BCE).

⁵¹ Thus the ancient law maker Manu explains the terms ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’ in a clear term. He holds that those who accept the Vedas as the authority are regarded as orthodox and the opponents are called heterodox (*nāstika*) [*nāstiko vedanindakaḥ*] (*Manusmṛti* 1920: Verse 2.11).

⁵² Karl. H. Potter holds ‘Upaniṣad’ to be ‘a term of doubtful etymology’ (Potter 1998: p. 3).

⁵³ Roodurmun 2002: p. 9.

⁵⁴ For details, see *Prakaraṇapañcikā* 1961: *Bhūmikā*, p. 9 and *Mīmāṃsādarśana* 1984-86: Vol. 1, *prastāvanā*, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁵ MS too, in his *Prasthānabheda* (PB), classifies Mīmāṃsā into Karmamīmāṃsā and Śārīrakamīmāṃsā (*Sarvadarśanasamgraha* 1977: *Prasthānabheda*, p. 6).

Some modern scholars, such as Karl H. Potter and Asko Parpola,⁵⁶ have suggested that, originally, the Mīmāṃsā was a single hermeneutic discipline dealing holistically with the Veda as a whole, and was only later split into different and competing schools as the subject matter of the two sections of the Veda led in different directions and began to seem mutually exclusive. Indeed, certain thinkers in the extant tradition ascribe a similar view to what is known as the *jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda*, according to which the two disciplines are complementary in their aims.⁵⁷ Indeed, many of the maxims (*nyāya*-s) for interpreting the Vedic injunctions that were formulated in the Pūrvamīmāṃsā were employed for explaining the import of the Upaniṣadic statements by the followers of the Vedānta school.

The Vedānta philosophy is born from the critical interpretation of the Upaniṣads. However, because of the multifaceted nature of the Upaniṣadic teaching, many divergent interpretations were possible, leading to radically different schools of thought within the Vedānta itself.⁵⁸ Some schools, like the non-dualistic school of Śaṅkara, hold that the individual self (*jīva*) has no reality apart from that of *brahman*, while the world (*jagat*) is an unreal transformation (*vivarta*) of *brahman*, and also a genuine transformation (*pariṇāma*) of nescience (*avidyā*) of the individual-self about the nature of *brahman*. So they accept only one reality,⁵⁹ i.e. *brahman/ātman*, which is pure consciousness (*śuddha-caitanya*) and impersonal, devoid of any quality (*nirguṇa*) and a unitary whole (*akhaṇḍa*). According to this school, *jīva* attains liberation (*mokṣa*) when the knowledge of non-difference (*abheda*) between the supreme reality and the individual self dawns.

⁵⁶ See Potter 2006: pp. 4-5, Potter 1998: p. 11 and Parpola 1981: pp. 152-3.

⁵⁷ See Sharma 1976: p. 211.

⁵⁸ See Potter 1998: pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹ See *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 150 for a proper account of this view.

By contrast, the qualified non-dualistic school of Rāmānuja (i.e. the Viśiṣṭādvaita school)⁶⁰ admits the absolute reality as something that is qualified by dependent matter (*acit*) and individual-souls (*cit*), viewing it as personal Godhead (*īśvara*). With divine grace (*prasāda*) accessed through worship or meditation (*upāsanā*) and self-surrender (*prapatti*) to God (*īśvara*), the individual self realizes itself as the body of *brahman* and attains liberation, but does not become identical with *brahman*. The Dvaita school of Madhva holds that the individual self and *brahman* are completely different from each other. Other than these, we also have the school of Dualism cum non-dualism (Dvaitādvaita) of Nimbārka (ca. 12th century CE), Pure non-dualism (Śuddhādvaita) of Vallabha (15th century CE); and Acintyabhedābheda of Caitanya (1486-1533 CE), which admits identity-in-difference that obtains between *brahman*, *jīva* and *jagat*, and the nature of which is essentially indescribable and unthinkable due to the unthinkable power of God.

Despite the importance of Śaṅkara's Advaita system, the origins of the Advaita viewpoint cannot be traced exclusively to him.⁶¹ Advaita teachings are also found in the epics and Purāṇas, as also, of course, in the Upaniṣads.⁶² We find mention of some teachers and schools supporting the non-dualistic positions anterior to Śaṅkara⁶³ and Bādarāyaṇa⁶⁴ in their respective works. There is however no doubt that Śaṅkara's thought was a watershed in Advaita theory, so that the development of the Advaita tradition can be divided into pre-Śaṅkara and post-Śaṅkara periods. Bādarāyaṇa, Upavarṣa (BCE), Gauḍapāda (6th century CE), and

⁶⁰ See Buitenen 1968: Foot note 1, p. 1 for etymology of this term, the Sanskrit equivalent for which is *viśiṣṭādvaita*.

⁶¹ See Potter 1998: p. 6.

⁶² See Balasubramanian 2004: Introduction, p. xlv.

⁶³ For example, *BSB* 3.5.53 (*Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 850) [Also see Potter 1998: p. 9 ff.].

⁶⁴ For example, *BS* 1.2. 29, 1.2.30, 1.4.21, 1.4.22, 3.1.9, 3.4.44 etc. (Also see Parpola 1981: pp. 156-7 and Potter 1998: p. 10).

Bhaṭṭarhari (7th century CE) have been named by some as pre-Śaṃkara Advaitins.⁶⁵ Sureśvara (7th century CE), Padmapāda (7th century CE), Vācaspati Miśra (9th century CE), Prakāśtman (11th century CE), Citsukha (13th century CE), and MS are the most notable figures of the later Śaṃkarite tradition.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Maṇḍana Miśra (7th century CE), the author of the *Brahmasiddhi*, and Sarvajñātman are two seminal figures in the pre-Śaṃkarite⁶⁷ and post-Śaṃkarite traditions respectively.

As our aim is to evaluate the degree to which MS was influenced by the thought of the different post-Śaṃkara schools, we must first discuss the basic tenets of these schools. In the history of the development of Advaita since Śaṃkara's time, three lines⁶⁸ or schools have come into prominence (i) Sureśvara and his follower Sarvajñātmamuni, (ii) Padmapāda and his commentator Prakāśātmayati, and (iii) Vācaspati Miśra and his followers.⁶⁹

Sureśvara,⁷⁰ a direct disciple of Śaṃkara, is known in the tradition as the *Vārtika-kāra*⁷¹ (an author of the critical treatment of a commentary) and the tradition initiated with him is called the *Vārtika-kāra-prasthāna*. His famous works are *Bṛhadāraṇyakabhāṣyavārtika*, *Taittirīyabhāṣyavārtika* and *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*. Though *brahman*, the only reality (*sat*), is the substratum (*āśraya*) and the material

⁶⁵ See Balasubramanian 2004: Introduction, p. xlv.

⁶⁶ See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 255.

⁶⁷ There is debate about whether Maṇḍana Miśra was before, after, or contemporaneous with Śaṃkara (See Thrasher 1993: Appendix A etc.).

⁶⁸ Though the schools followed by Padmapāda and Vācaspati respectively are considered to be the twofold division of post-Śaṃkara Advaita, the views held by Sureśvara are considered by some in the tradition as well as the modern scholars to constitute a separate school of thought in post-Śaṃkara era. Some modern scholars are of the view that only Sureśvara had the proper understanding of Śaṃkara's intent (See Potter 2006: p. 6).

⁶⁹ See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 257.

⁷⁰ It has been a matter of debate whether Sureśvara is identical with Maṇḍana Miśra, the famous author of the *Brahmasiddhi* (For details, see Hiriyana 1923 and 1924, Kane 1928, *Brahmasiddhi* 1994, Balasubramanian 1962, Sastri 1936-37 etc.).

⁷¹ A *vārtika* has been defined as a work which explains what is said (*ukta*), what is left unsaid (*anukta*), and what is imperfectly said (*durukta*) in the original [*uktānuktaduruktārthavyakti (cintā) kāri tu vārtikam*] (*vārtika* changed to *vārtika*) [Apte 1998: p. 845].

cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the world, Sureśvara holds, *māyā* (illusion) or *avidyā* (nescience) is its mediate cause (*dvāra-kāraṇa*). It is through *māyā* that the unalterable (*avikārin*) *brahman* appears as the multiple world of existence. Whereas from the standpoint of supreme reality (*pāramārthika-sattā*) neither *māyā* nor its creation exists, the practical (*vyāvahārika*) standpoint of the ignorant *jīva*-s makes *māyā* appear in *brahman*.⁷² Thus, *brahman* is both the locus (*āśraya*) and the object (*viṣaya*) of *avidyā*.⁷³ The Vedic texts like ‘*tattvamasi*’ (*CU* 6.8.7) etc. produce the immediate knowledge (*aparokṣa-jñāna*) of *ātman* as *brahman* by removing *avidyā*.⁷⁴ This theory is known as the *śābdāparokṣa-vāda*. According to Sureśvara, *avidyā* cannot be twofold; it must be one, the supreme-self, *brahman*, being both its support and its object.⁷⁵ The individual self (*jīva*), Sureśvara holds, is but the reflection of *brahman* (*cidābhāsa*) in the mind (*antaḥkāraṇa*), a product of *avidyā*, whereas its reflection on *avidyā* is called God (*īśvara*). This reflection (*pratibimba*), being different from the original (*bimba*), is an illusory appearance (*ābhāsa*) of the absolute *brahman*; thus, it is known as the theory of appearance (*ābhāsa-vāda*).⁷⁶

For Sureśvara, action (*karma*) is necessary until the desire for knowledge (*vividiṣā*) arises. Knowledge which gets the self liberated is not produced, as it already exists (*siddha*).⁷⁷ Having supported the doctrine of liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*) held by Śaṅkara, Sureśvara thinks that the body need not fall off as soon as one realizes one’s unity with the supreme self.⁷⁸ Sarvajñātmamuni has

⁷² See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 258.

⁷³ Mahadevan 1972: Verse 183a, p. 94 (Also see Deutsch and Buitenen 1971: pp. 227-8).

⁷⁴ Mahadevan 1972: Verse 178a, p. 91.

⁷⁵ *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārtika* 1892-94: Vol. 2, 2.4.199, p. 1065.

⁷⁶ Also see *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 42-6.

⁷⁷ Balasubramanian 1974: Verse 1.1, p. 1.

⁷⁸ *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣyavārtika* 1892-94: Vol. 2, 1.4.1546, p. 739.

followed many of Sureśvara's views.⁷⁹ Thus, having differed from Maṇḍana Miśra in many respects, Sureśvara's interpretation of Advaita had immense bearing on the later Śaṅkara schools, particularly on that which is known as the *Vivaraṇa*.

The later disagreements regarding the interpretation of Śaṅkara's commentary on the *BS*,⁸⁰ specially the conflicting views regarding the support (*āśraya*) and object (*viṣaya*) of nescience (*avidyā*), gave rise to two other lines of thought (*prasthāna*) soon after Śaṅkara. These are the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*, initiated by Padmapāda and developed by Prakāśātmayati, and the *Bhāmātī-prasthāna*, initiated by Vācaspati Miśra and developed by Amalānanda Sarasvatī (13th century CE). The followers of both the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna* and the *Bhāmātī-prasthāna* cite the authority of Śaṅkara in support of their respective and mutually conflicting views.⁸¹

Padmapāda, a direct disciple of Śaṅkara, wrote a sub-commentary on the master's *BSB*, called the *Pañcapādikā*, the oldest gloss (*ṭīkā*) on it.⁸² Besides this, Padmapāda is said to have composed the *Ātmabodhavyākhyā* or the *Vedāntasāra*.⁸³ Though several commentaries⁸⁴ and sub-commentaries have come to be written on the *Pañcapādikā*, the *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa* by Prakāśātmayati stands foremost among them, lending its name to the *Vivaraṇa* school. Padmapāda holds that indefinable nescience (*anīrvacanīyāvidyā*) is both the material cause of

⁷⁹ Veezhinathan 1985: Verse 1.20, pp. 9-10; 2.132, pp. 315-6 (For details, see Bhattacharya 1975: pp. 259-61; Deutsch and Buitenen 1971: p. 267 ff.; and *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 46).

⁸⁰ Though unlike Padmapāda and Vācaspati Miśra, Sureśvara did not write any commentary on Śaṅkara's *BSB*, his *vārtika*-s on Śaṅkara's work justifies him to initiate a new line of interpretation.

⁸¹ For example, see *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 1.4.3, p. 378; *BS* 2.3.41, pp. 619-20.

⁸² The very name of the work indicates that it consists of five explanatory parts (*pāda*-s), i.e. *padaccheda*, *padārthokti*, *vigraha*, *vākya-yojana*, *ākṣepa-samādhāna*. Though only first four aphorisms including the introductory *adhyāsa-bhṣya* portion of Śaṅkara are only available, there has been a tradition to indicate that the author commented on the whole (Also see *Pañcapādikā* 1958; Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 200; and Potter 1998: p. 563).

⁸³ Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 103.

⁸⁴ For other commentaries on *Pañcapādikā*, see Roodurmum 2002: p. 40 and *Pañcapādikā* 1958.

superimposition (*adhyāsa*) and the appearance of the world.⁸⁵ This point is further elaborated by Prakāśātmayati who holds *avidyā* to be a positive entity (*bhāva-rūpa*).⁸⁶ And being so, it becomes the material cause of superimposition and the concealment of the true nature of reality, viz. *brahman*.⁸⁷ Though *avidyā* exists in pure-consciousness (*śuddha-caitanya* or *brahman*), it affects the individual selves through its power of concealment (*āvaraṇa-śakti*). Thus, *brahman* becomes both the substratum and the object of *avidyā*,⁸⁸ which shows the allegiance of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna* to the line of Sureśvara discussed above.

Unlike Sureśvara, both Padmapāda and Prakāśātmayati hold the reflected images (*pratibimba*) to be as real as the original (*bimba*). Thus the *jīva*-s, which are the reflected images of *brahman* in the mind, are as real as *brahman*.⁸⁹ Just as *bimba* and *pratibimba* are essentially identical, so too are *brahman* and the *jīva*-s. Since the manifest world (*prapañca*) cannot be treated either as existent (*sat*) or as non-existent (*asat*), and is destroyed with the emergence of true knowledge of the self (*brahma-jñāna*), and is sublated (*bādhita*) in its own locus (*brahman*),⁹⁰ its falsity (*mithyātva*) is evident.

Regarding the relation of action to liberation and the role of the Vedic sentences in the generation of immediate knowledge of *brahman-ātman*, the *Vivaraṇa* school follows what we find in the works of Sureśvara.⁹¹ Interpreting the

⁸⁵ See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 263.

⁸⁶ See Balasubramanian 2004: p. 253.

⁸⁷ See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 263.

⁸⁸ See Balasubramanian 2004: p. 246.

⁸⁹ Also see *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 46.

⁹⁰ A rope appears to be a snake in darkness, but the existence of snake, which we know can never be existent in the rope, is negated as soon as the rope is brought in light. See Bhattacharya 1975: pp. 264-5.

⁹¹ See Balasubramanian 2004: pp. 279-80.

text ‘*ātman* should be realized’ etc.,⁹² *Vivaraṇa-kāra* holds the injunction ‘*śrotavyaḥ*’ to be a restrictive one (*niyama-vidhi*),⁹³ i.e. one should endeavor to hold discussion on *brahman*. Thus, according to this school, *śravaṇa* stands foremost among the three means for the direct realization of *brahman* [i.e. Vedāntic study (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*), and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*)].⁹⁴

The *Bhāmatī-prasthāna* of Vācaspati Miśra also had considerable influence on the later Advaitins. Vācaspati was an independent commentator on almost all of classical systems of Indian philosophy (*sarva-tantra-svatantra*). Apart from the *Bhāmatī*, his famous sub-commentary on the *BSB* of Śaṅkara,⁹⁵ Vācaspati authored a number of important commentaries and independent works on various systems, which have been listed at the end of the *Bhāmatī*,⁹⁶ including the *Tātparyāṭīka* (on the *Nyāyavārtika* of Udyotakara), *Nyāyasūcīnibandha*, *Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī* (on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa), *Tattvavaiśārādī* (on the *Vyāsabhāṣya* of the *Yogasūtra*-s), *Tattvabindu* (an independent treatise on the Mīmāṃsā school), *Nyāyakaṇikā* (on the *Vidhiviveka* of Maṇḍana Miśra) and *Brahmatattvasamīkṣā*.⁹⁷

⁹² ‘You see, Maitreyi- it is one’s self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate’ (*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsītavyaḥ maitreyi*, BU 2.4.5).

⁹³ *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Pañcapādikā*, *dvitīyavarṇakam*, p. 196; *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*, *prathamavarṇakam*, pp. 33-8; *dvitīyavarṇakam*, p. 451: 195-10; *navamavarṇaka*, p. 773: 354-1 (Vedic texts conveying injunctions are known as *vidhi-vākya*-s which are generally classified into three kinds; *apūrva-vidhi* which is found in the Vedas, and not anywhere else, *niyama-vidhi* which is concerned with controlling activity, and *parisaṃkhyā-vidhi* which excludes others means in order to follow a particular way).

⁹⁴ For details, see *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*, *prathamavarṇakam*, pp. 29-30, p. 33, p. 38, pp. 410-3: 172-8 (Also see Balasubramanian 2004: p. 274).

⁹⁵ Tradition holds that Vācaspati named the work after his wife *Bhāmatī* (Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 209).

For a list of the important commentaries and sub-commentaries on the *Bhāmatī*, see Roodurmun 2002: pp. 36-7 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000.

⁹⁶ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī*, concluding verse 3, p. 1020.

⁹⁷ The *Brahmatattvasamīkṣā*, long thought to be lost, has recently been discovered in a Nepal manuscript. It has been critically edited in 2006 by Diwakar Acharya, as part of the Nepal Research Centre series from Stuttgart. Except *Vaiśeṣika*, Vācaspati wrote on the other five of the six orthodox

In contrast to the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*, Vācaspati Miśra holds that *brahman* is the material cause of the world but not the locus of nescience, because it is of the nature of knowledge (*vidyā*).⁹⁸ Rather, *jīva* is the locus of *avidyā* and as *jīva*-s are many, there must be a plurality of nesciences held by different *jīva*-s. With regard to the appearance of *jīva*-s, he maintains that even though *avidyā* in one individual self is negated by the realization of the supreme reality *brahman*, it remains in other selves to limit the infinite self in them, giving them a feeling that separate individuals are moving in bondage. In contrast, the consciousness transcending the limiting adjunct is called *īśvara*. This view, known as the theory of limitation (*avaccheda-vāda*) is upheld in Vācaspati's notions of *jīva* and *brahman*.⁹⁹

Despite his acceptance, in agreement with Sureśvara and Padmapāda, of *karma* as a remote cause (*ārādupakāraka*) of liberation, his disagreement with them is conspicuous when he denies the claim that the Vedic texts can produce the immediate knowledge of *brahman*. Vācaspati, following Maṇḍana, holds that the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*) is a sense-organ, which, when purified by meditation (*nididhyāsana*), produces the final intuition, i.e. the immediate knowledge of *brahman-ātman*, though *śabda* may be a help to cleanse the mind.¹⁰⁰ Unlike Sureśvara, Vācaspati does not accept '*śrotavyaḥ*' as an injunction, but only as a restatement (*anuvāda*) of what we are capable of knowing with our ordinary senses.¹⁰¹ Moreover, for him, meditation (*nididhyāsana*) carries a higher value than

systems (*ṣaḍ-darśana*). His last work seems to be *Bhāmatī*, as it lists all his other compositions (*Tattvasamīkṣā* 2006 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 1020).

⁹⁸ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī*, 1.4.3, pp. 377-81.

⁹⁹ See Bhattacharya 1975: p. 267 and Balasubramanian 2004: p. 321 (Also see *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 47).

¹⁰⁰ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BS* 1.1.1, *Bhāmatī*, pp. 55-8 (Also see Bhattacharya 1975: pp. 267-8).

¹⁰¹ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī* on *BS* 1.1.4, 1.4.6, 3.2.5, 3.4.6, 3.4.8, 4.1.1, 3.4.14 etc. (Order in the *BS* cited here seems to be in the order of *adhyāya*, *pāda*, and *adhikaraṇa*, not in the order of

the Vedāntic study (*śravaṇa*) and reflection (*manana*).¹⁰² Thus, Vācaspati's views mark a departure from Śaṅkara's disciples, owing much to Maṇḍana Miśra.¹⁰³

1.4. The influence of post-Śaṅkara Advaita on Madhusūdana's thought

Having familiarized ourselves with the basic tenets of the post-Śaṅkara schools of Advaita and their followers, we may discuss the influence that they had upon MS's works. MS often refers to Sureśvara with great respect, referring to his work as *vārtikāmṛta* (*vārtika*, the nectar).¹⁰⁴ Following Sureśvara's theory of appearance or semblance (*ābhāsa-vāda*), MS argues that the same *brahman* could be both the individual self (*jīva*) and God (*īśvara*).¹⁰⁵ In reply to an objection that one should attain immediate liberation when knowledge of an object covered with ignorance is produced, MS says in the *SB* that ignorance is not completely destroyed but is only overpowered by the mental modifications (*vṛtti*-s), and that final absolution is possible only when complete obliteration of ignorance is made. He also says that *avidyā*, which is destroyed by the knowledge produced by the Upaniṣadic great sentences (*mahāvākya*-s), has *brahman* as its object (*viṣaya*). Since ignorance of an object presupposes the antecedent non-existence of its knowledge (*jñāna*-

adhyāya, *pāda*, and *sūtra*) [cf. *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Bhūmikā*, pp. 120-2]. Also see Bhattacharya 1975: p. 268.

¹⁰² *Brahmasūtra* 2000: BS 3.4.26, *Bhāmatī*, p. 898 (Also see Roodurmun 2002: p. 37).

For a fuller discussion of the basic points of difference between the *Vivaraṇa* and *Bhāmatī* schools, refer to *Pañcapādikā* 1958: Sanskrit introduction and *Pañcapādikā* 2009: English introduction, pp. iii-viii ff.

¹⁰³ Anubhūti Svarūpācārya (13th century CE), in his sub-commentary on the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* of Śaṅkara, called the *Prakaṭārthavivaraṇa*, referred to Vācaspati Miśra's dependence on Maṇḍana Miśra derogatorily as '*maṇḍanaprṣṭhasevī*' (Also see Bhattacharyya 1974: pp. 344-7, Mahadevan 1961: p. 292 and Roodurmun 2002: p. 35).

¹⁰⁴ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 5, *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 40, 43, 53, 90, 150; *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 556 and 558, and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 676 (Also see Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. XCIII and Gupta 2006: p. 3).

¹⁰⁵ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 42-5.

prāgabdhāva),¹⁰⁶ it has to be accepted that there are as many ignorances as there are knowledges.¹⁰⁷ Thus, this view is a clear case of admitting the view of the *Vārtika-kāra*.¹⁰⁸ His reverence for Sureśvara is such that he places him on equal footing with Śaṅkara as the true systematisers of the *Vedāntasūtra*-s.¹⁰⁹

Sarvajñātman, a follower of the *Vārtika-prasthāna*, has also been referred to by MS. In his commentary on Sarvajñātman's *ŚŚ*, MS identifies his teacher Deveśvara as Sureśvarācārya.¹¹⁰ In the *SB*, MS quotes Sarvajñātman's view regarding the identity between *brahman* and *jīva*, which is inherited from Sureśvara and developed in the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*.¹¹¹ Sarvajñātman is again referred to as an authoritative writer in his other works, such as the *AdRR*,¹¹² *AdS*¹¹³ etc. Following the view of Sarvajñātman that indivisible consciousness is both the locus and content of ignorance,¹¹⁴ MS accepts that *brahman* is both the substratum (*āśraya*) and the object (*viśaya*) of *avidyā*.¹¹⁵ Even in explaining the Upaniṣadic great sentences (*mahāvākya*-s), MS follows Sarvajñātman's manner of exposition.¹¹⁶ The theory of one-self (*ekajīva-vāda*) is also discussed in agreement with Sarvajñātman.¹¹⁷ Thus, the *Vārtika-prasthāna* of post-Śaṅkara Advaita is attested in MS's writing as he develops his own view.

¹⁰⁶ This is a kind of non-existence (*abhāva*) attributed by the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, which implies the non-existence of an object before its production.

¹⁰⁷ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 62-4 (Also see *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 467).

¹⁰⁸ See Gupta 2006: p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 153 (Also see *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 900).

¹¹⁰ Giri 2007: Pt. 1, p. 31.

¹¹¹ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 44-6.

¹¹² *Advaitaratnarakṣana* 1917: p. 5.

¹¹³ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 577.

¹¹⁴ *āśrayatvaviśayatvabhāginī nirvibhāga citireva kevalā* (Veezhinathan 1985: Verse 1.319, pp. 305-6).

¹¹⁵ *avidyāyā āśrayastu śuddhaṁ brahmaiva...* (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 577) and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 356 (Sarvajñātman is also referred to by MS in the *GD* on *BhG* 18.2 --- *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 676).

¹¹⁶ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 3-10 and Divānji 1933: Explanatory and critical notes, pp. 9-15.

¹¹⁷ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 46-49.

Padmapāda is also referred to in the *AdS*¹¹⁸ and *GD*¹¹⁹ of MS. The views of Prakāśātmayati, better known as the *Vivaraṇa-kāra* in post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedānta, is also supported by MS in various respects.¹²⁰ He is referred to in the *AdS* of MS several times.¹²¹ In order to establish (*siddhi*) non-dualism, MS first tries to falsify the existence of the multiple-universe (*jagat-prapañca*) which is the product of *avidyā*. In order to do so, he has given five different definitions of falsity (*mithyātva*). Among them, the first three are based on the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna* and the remaining two seem to have a likeness with those provided by Citsukha (13th century CE) and Ānandabodha (12th century CE) respectively.¹²²

In order to explain how *brahman* gives rise to God and the individual self, MS supports the reflection theory (*pratibimba-vāda*) of the *Vivaraṇa-kāra*. While supporting the view that inference removes only the notion of non-existence (*abhāva*) of an object, and that direct awareness, i.e. perception alone, can destroy its non-manifestation (*abhānatva*), MS quotes Vidyāraṇyamuni,¹²³ a follower of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*. Vidyāraṇya is also implicitly cited when MS talks about *yoga* and *jñāna* as two distinct ways of liberation.¹²⁴ In line with *yogic* ideas, MS holds that the self in the dream state (*svapnāvasthā*) possesses a special modification (*vṛtti*) of *avidyā*, called sleep (*nidrā*), a stance supported by the *Vivaraṇa-kāra*.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. XCII (He has also made use of *Vivaraṇa-kāra*'s doctrines, *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 486-7) [See Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. Xvii].

¹¹⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 379.

¹²⁰ Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. CVII (Also see *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 743).

¹²¹ Cf. Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. CVIII.

¹²² *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 48-51, 94-100, 160, 182-183 and 195-203 (For details, see Gupta 2006: p. 28 ff.).

¹²³ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 46, 66.

¹²⁴ Compare PD 12.83 of Vidyāraṇya (*Pañcadaśī* 2008: p. 446) with *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* on BhG 6.29, pp. 316-20.

¹²⁵ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 558-9 (Also see Gupta 2006: pp. 97-8).

The views of Vācaspati Miśra, the exponent of the *Bhāmatī* school, are also referred to in MS's *AdS*.¹²⁶ Having stated Sarvajñātman's view that pure consciousness is both the substratum and object of *avidyā*, MS goes on to state Vācaspati's contention that *brahman* is the content of *avidyā* supported by the individual selves, for, being beginningless (*anādi*), *avidyā* and *jīva* are not interdependent (*anyonyāśrita*).¹²⁷ In the *AdRR*, MS's view that the Vedic texts can generate only mediate (*parokṣa*) knowledge of *brahman*, and that the mind alone, prepared through different means of liberation, i.e. *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*, can produce the immediate knowledge of the supreme reality, clearly support the *prasaṅkhyāna* theory held by Maṇḍana Miśra etc., which is upheld by Vācaspati as well.¹²⁸ MS again mentions the limitation theory (*avaccheda-vāda*) attributed to Vācaspati and his followers as an explanation of the relation of pure consciousness and the individual self.¹²⁹ The corollary of this doctrine, i.e., that there are as many ignorances as there are individual selves, is upheld by MS when he says that only that individual self whose ignorance is dispelled gets liberated.¹³⁰ In another context, the role of a modification of the mind (*vṛtti*) in generating knowledge is also supported by the theory of limitation.¹³¹

Summing up, we find the influence of the *Vārtika-prasthāna* on the *Vivaraṇa prasthāna* and the influence of Maṇḍana on the *Bhāmatī-prasthāna*. As far as MS is concerned, we find that he makes frequent reference to the views of Sureśvara, Sarvajñātman, Padmapāda, Prakāśātman etc., and is generally considered to be a

¹²⁶ Cf. Divāṅji 1933: Introduction, p. XCIX.

¹²⁷ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 585 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Vedāntakalpataruḥ*, pp. 2-3 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 26).

¹²⁸ Cf. Divāṅji 1933: Introduction, p. XCIX.

¹²⁹ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 47.

¹³⁰ *Advaitaratnarakṣana* 1917: p. 6.

¹³¹ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 58-61.

follower of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*.¹³² In the *GD* of MS, we may point out his preference for the views of the *Vārtika-prasthāna* (e.g. references to the *Vārtika-kāra* in the *GD* on *BhG* 2.29, 2.40, 3.20, 3.29, 3.27, 4.24, 5.1, 5.21, 12.20; and the views of Sarvajñātman in his *SS* that *brahman* is both the substratum and object of nescience on *BhG* 8.3 and 18.2). While asserting verbal testimony (*śabda-pramāṇa*) to be the cause of the immediate knowledge of *brahman/ātman* in introductory verse eighteen of the *GD*, he accepts an important doctrine of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna*. In addition, the view that MS has largely followed the doctrines of the *Vivaraṇa-prasthāna* in his *GD* is substantiated by the following: References in the *GD* to the *drṣṭi-srṣṭi-vāda* (on *BhG* 2.28, 5.22 and 18.14); the *eka-jīva-vāda* (on *BhG* 4.5); *brahman* as the substratum (*āśraya*) and object (*viśaya*) of ignorance (on *BhG* 5.16 and 7.6); the arising of *brahman*-knowledge on maturity of *nididhyāsana* (on *BhG* 5.17, 25); citations of the *JMV* of Vidyāraṇya (on *BhG* 6.36); the *pratibimba-vāda* as a Vedāntic theory for explaining the relation between *brahman* and *jīva* (on *BhG* 2.15, 7.14, 14.6 and 15.7); the *Pañcapādikā* of Padmapādācārya (on *BhG* 8.3); and the *Vivaraṇa-kāra* (on *BhG* 18.56). Nevertheless, he is not totally opposed to Vācaspati and his *Bhāmatī* line of interpretation, and makes use of it at certain points (e.g. references to the *śabda-parokṣa-vāda* on *BhG* 2.29 and 5.16, the *avacheda-vāda* on *BhG* 15.7, Maṇḍana Mīśra on *BhG* 18.18). In short, MS made use of building blocks from all the major Advaitic systems prevalent in his time to construct his own philosophical edifice.

As noted above, the Vedānta philosophy has its roots in the hermeneutics of scriptural sources. Specifically, there are three canonical texts (*prasthāna-trayī*)

¹³² Gupta 2006: pp. 3-4.

upon which all Vedāntic thinkers rely. These are the Upaniṣads (*śruti-prasthāna*), *BS* by Bādarāyaṇa (*nyāya-prasthāna*), and the *BhG* (*smṛti-prasthāna*).¹³³ As *MS*'s *GD* is a commentary on the last of these, it will be useful to say a few words about the text our author was working with, together with a brief note on the tradition of the *BhG* commentary that preceded *MS*.

1.5. The *Bhagavadgītā* and its commentarial tradition

The *BhG* is contained within Book 6, the *Bhīṣmaparvan*, of the *Mahābhārata* (*MBh*), the great Sanskrit epic of ancient India. It covers eighteen chapters (23-40) and runs to seven hundred verses both in *anuṣṭubh* (generally of thirty two syllables) and *triṣṭubh* (of forty four syllables usually) metre. The *BhG* consists of a dialogue (*saṃvāda*) between Arjuna and Lord Kṛṣṇa as recounted by Sañjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*MBh* 6.23.1).¹³⁴ One of the principal teachings of the *BhG* is that it does not ask all seekers to abstain from action but to perform it without having a desire for its fruit (*niskāma-karma*). It considers Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme *puruṣa*,¹³⁵ to whom the seekers are asked to surrender completely with utmost devotion. Throughout the text, the Lord teaches Arjuna the means for attainment of liberation (*mokṣa*), the supreme goal of human kind, and accords a pre-eminent place to devotion to the Lord as a means to liberation.

There are many opinions regarding the date, authorship, structure and philosophy of the *BhG*, and its relation to the *MBh*. As we are concerned here only

¹³³ Some scholars hold that the *BhG* is not treated as important as the other two foundational sources by the Advaitins; for despite its Advaitic element, it represents a profound theistic orientation (See Deutsch 1973: Footnote 1, p. 3).

¹³⁴ *Mahābhārata* 1947: *Bhīṣmaparva* 6.23-6.40, pp. 114-88.

¹³⁵ See Malinar 2007: p. 207.

with how MS understood the text, however, these various views need not detain us here.¹³⁶ However, before discussing the commentarial tradition of the *BhG*, let us briefly say a few words about the place and utility of the commentarial method (*bhāṣya-prakriyā*), one of the fundamental characteristics of Indian philosophical tradition. Commentary is intended to analyse the texts and maintain their continuity intact. All texts, whether terse philosophical *sūtra*-s,¹³⁷ the Vedic lore, literary epics, texts on grammar, ethics, law and drama, are subject to commentary and sub-commentary. This tradition provides exegesis to reveal the true import of a text, which may be too obscure for most readers. This presumes, of course, that the text contains a coherent and unified, if hidden, inner meaning (*gūḍhārtha*) that an able commentator can convey to the reader in its full integrity.

There are several different kinds of commentary corresponding to the type and extent of exegesis needed. As Karl H. Potter writes, ‘Various sorts of commentaries are composed on *sūtras*, and then sub-commentaries and further commentaries on those. Traditionally, a *bhāṣya* is an extensive explanation of the meaning of the *sūtras*, a *ṽrtti* is a brief explanation, a *vārtika* a critical treatment of a *bhāṣya*, and so on.’¹³⁸

Of course, a commentator does not always slavishly follow the author whose work he is explaining; sometimes he points out the author’s shortcomings and tries

¹³⁶ See Appendix I for a detailed note on the historical background, formation, and teaching of the *BhG*.

¹³⁷ The *Parāśara Upapurāṇa* defines ‘*bhāṣyam*’ as that which explains aphorism (*sūtra*-s) word by word with comments of its own and what is called such by the wise (*sūtrārtho varṇyate yatra padaiḥ sūtrānusāribhiḥ / svapadāni ca varṇyante bhāṣyaṃ bhāṣyavido viduḥ* //) [Śāstrī 2005: Foot note 3, p. 543; added ‘*yatra padaiḥ*’ instead of ‘*yatra vākyaiḥ*’]. A *sūtra* is a short sentence or an aphoristic rule providing the strings or the threads that bind a subject together. It is often described as being composed of few letters, concise, suggestive of its claim and meaningful in every way (*alpākṣaram asandigdham sāravat viśvatomukham / astobham anavadyaṃ ca sūtraṃ sūtravido viduḥ* //) [Deva 1967: Pt. 5, p. 394].

¹³⁸ Potter 1998: pp. 4-5.

to find a remedy for them by formulating his own views. However, even when a commentator disagrees with one or another point of the main author, his overall goal is generally to defend the author's broader argument or viewpoint. This may, at times, require the commentator to make adjustments to the traditional argumentation, even to alter it and reject certain points within it.

The commentator is often a creative thinker in his own right. Though he may avoid claiming credit for original thinking, he is often responsible for great innovations of thought. Remarking on the function of commentary within the Sanskrit tradition, Daniel H. H. Ingalls observes as follows:

In the West we think of commentators as dull creatures, lacking in imagination, who take some one else's text to furnish themselves with ideas. And it is true that most Western commentators, when they go beyond the writings of footnotes, are dull. But the Indian tradition is different. The most original and imaginative products of the Indian intellect are given us in the form of commentaries. The Indian authors may try to hide their originality, borrowing from tradition as much as they can, attributing their new ideas to some ancient sage, but the originality is still there.¹³⁹

Charles Wilkins, the first translator of the *Gītā* into English (1784 CE), regarded commentary as essential for understanding the text. He observes;

...the commentators of India are not less fond of searching for mystery, and wandering from the simple path of their author into a labyrinth of scholastic jargon ... the comment written upon it by one Sree-dhara Swamee, whose notes upon the whole are held in as much esteem as the text, which at this day, they say, is unintelligible without them (*sic*).¹⁴⁰

It should be noted that in the vast literature of ancient *Gītā* commentaries prior to MS's time we find mainly the followers of various schools of the Vedānta philosophy, viz. Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Dvaitādvaita, Śuddhādvaita and Bhedābheda, while the Kashmirian commentators on the *BhG* represent a distinct philosophical outlook.¹⁴¹ Except for the Advaita and Kashmirian traditions, the

¹³⁹ Ingalls: 1952, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Wilkins: 1902, p. 134.

¹⁴¹ As noted earlier, though barring Śaṅkara, Ānandagiri, and Śrīdhara Svāmin, MS did not refer to any of his earlier commentators of the *BhG* explicitly while commenting on the *BhG*, he must have

commentators are mostly supporters of the *jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda*. These commentaries are now listed below in chronological order and in accordance with the respective schools of thought to which they belong. Following Karl H. Potter,¹⁴² we have cited mainly those commentaries on the *BhG* which seem to have been written up to the probable period of our author, MS. Theodor Aufrecht¹⁴³ has also mentioned a number of commentaries on the *BhG*, but we have restricted ourselves to the list given by Potter. On the same ground, the detailed *BhG* literature mentioned in the *New Catalogus Catalogorum*,¹⁴⁴ the *Epic and Purāṇic Bibliography* (upto 1985) *annoted and with indexes*¹⁴⁵ has likewise not been cited below.

Commentators before Śaṃkara: The *Gītābhāṣya* of Śaṃkara is the earliest extant commentary on the *BhG* available. Earlier commentaries had, however, been written, as is evident from Śaṃkara's own remarks:

This well-known *Gītā* scripture is the quintessence of the teaching of the Vedic lore, but its meaning is difficult to grasp. Even though many have tried to bring out its import by constructing the meaning of its words and sentences with the aid of logical arguments, I have observed that it has been grasped by the common people as a collection of self-contradictory and divergent ideas. I shall, therefore, write a brief commentary in order to bring out its contents with due discrimination.¹⁴⁶

Though Śaṃkara does not mention the names of the commentators preceding him, his passing criticism suggests that they must have adhered to the

been aware of the views of such earlier commentators of the *BhG*, as is evident throughout his comments.

¹⁴² Potter 1995: Pt. 2, pp.1464-6.

¹⁴³ Aufrecht 1962: pp. 391-3.

¹⁴⁴ Dash 2007: pp. 191-236.

¹⁴⁵ Stietencron, H. V. et al. 1992.

¹⁴⁶ *tad idaṃ gītāsāstraṃ samastavedārthasārasaṃgrahabhūtaṃ durvijñeyārthaṃ tadarthāviṣkaraṇāya anekair vivṛtapadārthavākyaṛthanyāyam api atyanta-viruddhānekārthatvena laukikair gr̥hyamānam upalabhya ahaṃ vivekato'rthanirdhāraṇārthaṃ saṃkṣepato vivaraṇaṃ kariṣyāmi* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, pp. 5-6).

doctrine of *Jñāna-karma-samuccaya*.¹⁴⁷ Among these, mention may be made of the *Vṛtti-kāra* referred to by Ānandagiri¹⁴⁸ and Bodhāyana, referred to by Rāmānuja,¹⁴⁹ and Bhartṛprapañca, a *Jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vādin*, as possible authors of lost pre-Śaṅkara commentaries.¹⁵⁰

Advaita commentators: Śaṅkara, Anubhūtiśvarūpācārya (1270 CE, a commentator of Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya*), Śaṅkarānanda (1290 CE), Piśāca (Hanumān, before 13/14th century CE), Ānandagiri (14th century CE, a commentator of Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya*), Śrīdhara Svāmin (14th century CE), Rāmānanda (ca. 14th century CE, a commentator of Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya* and the author of an independent commentary on the *BhG*, called the *Gītāśāya*), Daivajña Paṇḍita Sūrya (ca. 1440 CE, a commentator of Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya*), Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri (ca. 16th century CE), and Sadānanda Yogīndra (16th century CE) are the adherents to the Advaita school of Vedānta.¹⁵¹

Viśiṣṭādvaita commentators: In this group, one may place Yāmuna (10th century CE), Rāmānuja, Veṅkaṭanātha (13/14th century CE, a commentator of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya*), Varavaramuni (14th century CE, on

¹⁴⁷ According to this doctrine, liberation is attained through the knowledge of *brahman* along with the performance of duties recommended by the scriptures. Śaṅkara's vehement criticism against this view is found in his *bhāṣya* on *BhG* 2.21, 3.1, 4.18, 24, 13.12 and 18.6. (See Sarma 1932-33: p. 46, Buitenen 1965: p. 109 and Mainkar 1969: p. 58).

¹⁴⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Ānandagirivyākhyā*, p. 5; on *BhG* 3.1, pp. 134-9; on *BhG* 4.18, pp. 200-9 etc. (See also Radhakrishnan 2009: Vol. I, footnote 39, p. 452 and Ingalls 1952: pp. 10-11).

¹⁴⁹ Mainkar thinks that this *Vṛtti-kāra* and Bodhāyana, the author of a gloss on the *BS* of Bādarāyaṇa, are the one and same person whom Rāmānuja mentions in his *Śrībhāṣya* (See Mainkar 1969: p. 3).

¹⁵⁰ See Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: p.99.

¹⁵¹ Dates for authors are taken from Raghavan 1949: Manuscript citation, p. 442; Potter 1995: Vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 1464-5; Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 439; Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: List 20, p. 99 (Also refer to *Bhagavadgītā* 1999, 2000, 2001 etc. for the *BhG* commentaries cited here).

Yāmuna's *Gītābhāṣya*), and Pratyakṣadevayathācārya (on Yāmuna's *Gītābhāṣya*).¹⁵²

Dvaita commentators: Madhva, Padmanābha Tīrtha (1320 CE), Narahari Tīrtha (1330 CE), Jaya Tīrtha (1370 CE), Kṛṣṇa Śrīnivāsa Tīrtha, Vidyādhiraṇṇa Tīrtha (1388-1412 CE), and Śrīnivāsa belong to this group.¹⁵³

Śuddhādvaita commentators: Vallabha (15th century CE) has made no explicit explanation on the *BhG* but has written an independent work, called the *Tattvārthadīpa* or *Tattvadīpanibandha* (with his own gloss, the *Prakāśa*). Viṭṭhalanātha Dīkṣita (1518 -1588 CE), Kalyāṇa Bhaṭṭa (16th century CE), Vallabha (1617 CE, the fifth grand son of the founder Vallabha), and Puruṣottamajī (1668 - 1764 CE) are other commentators from this school.¹⁵⁴

Other commentators: The only notable commentators from the early Bhedābheda and the later Dvaitādvaita schools are Bhāskara (ca. 750 CE) and Keśava Kāśmīrī Bhaṭṭa (1510 CE) respectively. Vasugupta (ca. 9th century CE), Ānandavardhana (ca. 9th century CE), Rāmakaṇṭha (970 CE), and Abhinavagupta (1014 CE) belong to the Kashmirian group.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² There are two prose commentaries on the *BhG* along the Viśiṣṭādvaita lines, by people named Yāmuna, only one of whom is Rāmānuja's predecessor (Also see Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II p. 439 and Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: p. 91, 109-10, Aufrecht 1962: Pt. I, p. 393, and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000).

¹⁵³ D. Srinivasachar (1928: pp. 1009-23) assigns authorship of an unpublished manuscript of a *ṭīkā* on the *Gītābhāṣya* of Madhva, called the '*Bhāvapradīpikā* or *Bhāvaprakāśikā* or *Bhāvadīpikā*, to Padmanābhatīrtha. For details, see Sharma 1960-61: Vol. 1, p. 295 and Vol 2, p. 240 for manuscript citations; Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: List 71, p. 101, list 27, p. 99 and list 173, p. 107; as also *Bhagavadgītā* 2000 and 2007.

¹⁵⁴ Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: p. 93, list 197, p. 109, list 49, p. 100; and Bhatt 1949: pp. 131-4 for manuscript citations, as also *Bhagavadgītā* 1968: Editorial note, p. xiv and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000. The *Tattvadīpikā* is generally held to be a work of Vallabha, the proponent of the Śuddhādvaita school, and the *Amṛtataraṅginī* as a sub-commentary on it by Puruṣottamajī (See Bhatt 1949: Footnote 1, pp. 131 and 134).

¹⁵⁵ See *Bhagavadgītā* 1965, 2001, 1941, 1941a, and 1999.

1.6. A bird's eye-view of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

The title of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* means, literally, ‘the illuminator of the hidden meaning’. It is evident that for MS, the text of the *BhG* is not always transparent, and that he considers his work to reveal the true import of the text which, it may be implied, has been missed by other interpreters. However, as will be discussed in due course, MS’s decision to name his commentary ‘*Gūḍhārthadīpikā*’ after an assiduous study of Śaṃkara’s commentary on the *BhG* may also mean that MS wants to illuminate the hidden meaning of Śaṃkara’s *BhG* commentary. In his own work, MS affirms a philosophy which recognises other means of self-realisation, such as *yoga*, devotion to God (*bhakti*) and the analytical approach of the Sāṃkhya.¹⁵⁶ In spite of being an ardent follower of Śaṃkara Vedānta, MS’s principal aim in commenting on the *BhG* seems to have been to give a philosophical justification for the way of devotion (*bhakti-mārga*) that he followed himself.¹⁵⁷

MS divides the *BhG* into three sections of six chapters each, offering a unique justification for it. According to him, the first six chapters deal with the means relating to the path of sacrifice and social duty (*karma-yoga*). This, however, is considered merely as a means to the final goal, which is liberation (*mokṣa*). MS seeks to establish logically the essence of the pure self, indicated by the term ‘thou’ (*tvam*) of the Upaniṣadic dictum ‘That thou art’ (*tattvamasi*). The middle six chapters deal with the means, relating to the *yoga* of devotion (*bhakti-yoga*), making a transition from action (*karma*) to knowledge (*jñāna*) feasible. It determines the concept of ‘that’ (*tat*), the principle of supreme reality, through

J. C. Chatterji refers to manuscripts containing Vasugupta’s commentary called the *Vāsaviṭīkā* along with another commentary called the *Lāsakī* by Rājanaka Lasakāka. He also holds that the first six chapters of the former are incorporated in the latter (Chatterji 1986: p. 166).

¹⁵⁶ See Gambhirananda 2000a: Front flap.

¹⁵⁷ See Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 49.

instructions of devotion to and worship of the deity. The last six chapters expound the *yoga* of knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*), leading to the great equation made in *tattvamasi*.¹⁵⁸

Among the remarkable features of this commentary, one may highlight from the start its attempted synthesis of the paths of knowledge (*jñāna*) and devotion (*bhakti*), as well as its attempt to reconcile, as much as possible, the other Vedic schools of philosophy with the main tenets of Advaitic thought.¹⁵⁹ Unlike other commentaries on the *BhG*, it deals with almost every single word of the text, attributing to each a most nuanced connotation.¹⁶⁰ MS's unique style in the commentary can be seen in his expressions of abundant devotion to God coupled with the firm adherence to Śaṃkara's Advaita, evident in his original verses at the beginning and at the end of the chapters.¹⁶¹ MS points out variant readings of the text of the *BhG*, even where they do not substantially impact his understanding of the text.¹⁶²

As noted earlier, Patañjali's system of Yoga has been explained extensively in the *GD*, and the *YV* has also been frequently referred to.¹⁶³ Amidst all these remarkable features, the sole idea of complete surrender to God (*śaraṇāgati*), a total union of the individual with the absolute and a merger of the unqualified (*nirguṇa*) with the qualified (*saguṇa*) through love and devotion (*bhakti*), occupy the central

¹⁵⁸ *GD*, introductory verses 8-10.

¹⁵⁹ Gupta 1977: Translator's preface, p. x.

¹⁶⁰ *GD*, introductory verse 1 (Also see Gambhirananda 2000a: Introduction, p. 17).

¹⁶¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 521, 465 and 632.

¹⁶² See Appendix III.

¹⁶³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 156-8, 262-340.

place in the text of the *GD*.¹⁶⁴ In the concluding part of the book, the author justifies the synthesis of devotion (*bhakti*), action (*karma*), and knowledge (*jñāna*).¹⁶⁵

In spite of disagreements at times with Śaṅkara's explanation of the *BhG*, MS does not deviate from the fundamental Advaitic tenets of Śaṅkara.¹⁶⁶ Thus, it would seem that MS was willing to differ from Śaṅkara's interpretation of the *BhG* but not from his formulation of Advaita doctrine (*advaita-siddhānta*). In a few important instances, however, MS does offer an independent understanding of basic doctrine, such as when he argues that, by the knowledge of the Vedāntic great sentences (*mahāvākya*-s), we realise none but the supreme reality Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa.¹⁶⁷ This is in sharp contrast to Śaṅkara, for whom the absolute (*brahman*) is devoid of any personal characteristics.

The main editions of MS's *GD* are those of Kāśīnāthaśāstrī Āgāṣe (*Bhagavadgītā* 1912), Wāsudev Laxmaṇ Shāstrī Paṇsīkar (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), and Jivaram Lallurama Shastri (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001). Variant readings (*pāṭhabheda*) of MS's commentary are found in all three editions.¹⁶⁸ The present study is based primarily on Paṇsīkar's edition, which includes the only available sub-commentary on MS's *GD*, the *Gūḍhārthatattvāloka* (*GTL*) of Baccā Jhā (1860-1918 CE), also known as Dharmadattaśarmā or Baccāśarmā.¹⁶⁹ Another sub-commentary on the *GD* by one Hariyaśomiśra (18th century CE) is not extant.¹⁷⁰ Baccā Jhā's work is not a complete commentary on the *GD* and is heavily technical, revealing the high

¹⁶⁴ Gupta 1977: Translator's preface, p. X.

¹⁶⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 270-3, 298-303, 322-5, 326-8.

¹⁶⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 85-9, 95-7, 298, 752-5.

¹⁶⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p.751.

¹⁶⁸ See Appendix VI.

¹⁶⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999.

¹⁷⁰ Reference in Rājendralal Mitra's Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts, Calcutta, 1871-90 (Cf. Callewaert and Hemraj 1983: p. 101) [Also see Potter 1995: Vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 1465, and Aufrecht 1962: p. 393].

Navya-nyāya scholarship of the author, but is nevertheless very original in nature. Thus, though of limited use, it may not be ignored in our study of how MS understands the *BhG*.

An author's references to his own works indicate not only the chronological order of his writings, but also trace the path of his inner journey towards establishing his own philosophical outlook.¹⁷¹ Therefore, the other works of MS referred to in his commentary on the *BhG* may be cited. The references here are both explicit (where the author names the works referred to or quotes the same line occurring therein) and implicit (repeating the same ideas expressed elsewhere). Thus, the *SB* is referred to while MS argues about the nature of mind,¹⁷² *BhR* in the course of discussing the nature and means of devotion,¹⁷³ and *AdS* with regard to naming his preceptors, expressing his heart's joy to Lord Kṛṣṇa and examining the nature of mind.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, though the *AdS* does not refer to the *GD* by name, there are similar verses in both the works.¹⁷⁵

With regard to the available translations of the work, we have found two in English; one by Swami Gambhirananada (Gambhirananda 2000a) and another by Sisir Kumar Gupta (Gupta 1977). In addition, there are Hindi translations by Svāmī Sanātanadeva (Sanātanadeva 2005), Harihara Kṛpalu Dvivedī (Dvivedī 1975), and Madan Mohan Agrawal (Agrawal 2005) and a Bengali translation by Bhūtanātha

¹⁷¹ Pandey 1978: p. 87.

¹⁷² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 64 [Also see *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* on *BhG* 2.13, 2.15 and 2.28 in comparison to *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 11-2 (cf. Modi 1929: Introduction, footnote 41, p. 49)].

¹⁷³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 363, 751, and 754.

¹⁷⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 59, 64, and 263.

¹⁷⁵ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 750 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 632 and 775 (Also see *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, the fifth concluding verse of chapter 18, p. 775; and *Advaitasiddhi*, first line, introductory verse 2, p. 8).

Saptatīrtha (Brahma 1986). This thesis has profited extensively from all these, but has relied mostly on Gambhirananda's translation.¹⁷⁶

As mentioned earlier, the *GD* explicitly names only Śaṃkara,¹⁷⁷ Ānandagiri¹⁷⁸ and Śrīdhara¹⁷⁹ as earlier commentators of the *BhG*. Among the *BhG* commentators cited implicitly, Rāmānuja¹⁸⁰ and Jaya Tīrtha¹⁸¹ (a commentator of Madhva) are noteworthy. In later commentarial literature on the *BhG*, we find explicit references to the *GD* in the commentaries of Veṅkaṭanātha¹⁸² (16th century CE, teacher of Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra), Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri (16th century CE, the famous commentator of the *Mahābhārata* and an Advaitin),¹⁸³ Vallabhācārya¹⁸⁴ (17th century CE, grandson of Vallabhācārya, the founder of the Śuddhādvaita school), Puruṣottamajī (18th century CE, a proponent of Śuddhādvaita)¹⁸⁵ and Viśvanātha

¹⁷⁶ For a detailed note on these translations, refer to chapter 2.4.4 infra.

¹⁷⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*: pp. 1, 81, 83, 100, 108, 117, 141, 160, 188, 208, 212-213, 219, 298, 319, 326, 531, 554, 660, 664, 671, 682, 691, 695, 718-719, 755, 761, 772, and 775 [References to the comments on the *BS* and the Upaniṣads by Śaṃkara: pp. 61(*BS* 1.1.4), 63 (*BS*, implicit), 171 (*BU* 1.3.1), 232 (*MU* 1.2.12), 235 (*BS* 3.3.12), 405 (*BS* 4.3.2), and 691 (*BS* 3.1.8, implicit)].

¹⁷⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*: 'vyākhyātṛbhiḥcoktam', p. 188 and 'tadvyākhyātārah', p. 772.

¹⁷⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*: p. 314.

Śrīdhara is also referred to indirectly by MS by 'anye tu', p. 100; 'kecidicchanti', p. 550; 'kecittu', p. 628; 'mathitadugdhādītyanye', p. 660; 'atṛakāścidāha', p. 691; 'na niradhāri bhavateti', p. 691, *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* (Also refer to *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīdharīvyākhyā*, pp. 100, 552, 628, 660 and 690-92).

¹⁸⁰ Compare 'kecittu nityasya', p. 190, *Bagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* ('kaṃcittu nityasya' is a typographical error in this edition) and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, pp. 366-8.

¹⁸¹ Compare 'ahaṃ vāsudevākhyā parāśaktirasyeti tvapavyākhyānam', p. 550, *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and p. 50, *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 3, *Prameyadīpikā* of Jaya Tīrtha.

¹⁸² *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, pp. 47-8, 69, 81, 95, 107, 118, 170, 322, 379, 476-7; vol. 2, p. 68.

¹⁸³ Compare introductory verses 2, 3 and 5, pp. 2-5; 'kecidevamāhu', p. 70; 'Madhusūdanastu guṇāḥ...ahaṃkārāspadāni', p. 164; 'vyākhyāturapi me nāsti bhāṣyakāreṇa tulyatā', p. 207; '...yo vā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ...tanna', pp. 317-8; pp. 445-6; pp. 455-6; p. 657; 'anyetu tu phalābhisaṃdhiviśiṣṭasya', p. 688; and p. 712, *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Nīlakaṇṭhavyākhyā* (*Caturdharī*) with introductory verses 3 and 4, p. 2; 'atṛa najāyate...tadupasaṃhāra...', p. 68; '...guṇā... ahaṃkārāspadāni', p. 164; 'vyākhyātrve'pi me nātra bhāṣyakāreṇa tulyatā', p. 298; '...yo vā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ...evāpekṣitaḥ', p. 318; pp. 445-6; p. 455; p. 657; '... phalābhisaṃdhityāgaḥ sa...pūrvāparavirodhaḥ', pp. 685-6; and p. 712, *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*.

¹⁸⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 2, p. 38.

¹⁸⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Puruṣottamajīkṛtā* 'mṛtataraṅginīyupodghātaḥ', p. 18.

Cakravartin¹⁸⁶ (18th century CE, an exponent of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism). Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (18th century CE, an adherent to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism)¹⁸⁷ and Dhanapati Sūri (1750-1850 CE, a proponent of the Advaita school of Śaṅkara)¹⁸⁸ do not refer to the *GD* by name in their respective commentaries on the *BhG*, but copious anonymous citations confirm their awareness of the views expressed in the *GD*.

1.7. Distinctiveness of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* as a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*

Source texts of Indian philosophy may be classified into two types, in accordance with their method of presentation, viz. the systematic definition of truth (*tattva-nirūpaṇa*) or a general instruction of truth (*tattvopadeśa*). The *BhG* may be placed under the latter category. In the same way, we find two types of works in commentarial literature,¹⁸⁹ the topical (*adhikaraṇa-prasthāna*)¹⁹⁰ and polemical

¹⁸⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Sārārthavarṣiṇī*, pp. 120, 122, 123, 142, 199, 254, 385, 387, and 404.

¹⁸⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Gītābhūṣaṇa*, pp. 6, 121, 204, and 207-8; and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 9, 186, 357, and 362-3.

¹⁸⁸ The editor of *Bhagavadgītā* 1999 mentions the following pages where the *GD* is referred to in Dhanapati's commentary on the *Gītā*: pp. 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 47, 48, 51, 52, 56, 60, 66, 70, 71, 72, 76, 79, 82, 83, 88, 90, 97, 103, 114, 116, 126, 130, 131, 132, 142, 149, 142, 156, 158 (footnote seems to be missing as typographical error), 159, 161, 164, 167, 183, 185, 187, 190, 193, 196, 206, 209, 210, 218, 221, 222, 225, 231, 232, 239, 247, 253, 254, 258, 262, 274, 290, 292, 305, 306, 309, 316, 320, 343, 344, 351, 366, 367, 374, 382, 383, 400, 404, 424, 425, 426, 428, 431, 436, 440, 446, 450, 455, 489, 500 (though not mentioned, p. 500 bears concrete evidence), 513, 539, 541, 546, 547, 561, 562, 593, 594, 607, 610, 612, 618, 620, 634, 635, 636, 657, 664, 666, 686, 698, 707, 709, 715, 717, 718, and 743.

¹⁸⁹ See Nair 1990: p. 27.

¹⁹⁰ 'Adhikaraṇa' generally means a topic, subject, section, a complete argument treating a particular subject etc. *Sūtra*-s of Vyāsa and Jaimini are divided into the *adhyāya*-s, *adhyāya*-s into the *pāda*-s and *pāda*-s into the *adhikaraṇa*-s or sections. The general *adhikaraṇa*-s consist of five limbs:- the subject or matter to be explained (*viśaya*), the doubt or question arising upon that subject-matter (*viśaya* or *saṁśaya*), the view taken by the opponent (*pūrvapakṣa*) and the rejoinder or demonstrated conclusion (*uttara*) by the *siddhāntin* (*uttarapakṣa*), and the final conclusion (*nirṇaya*) arrived at after judging the two views of arguments for and against or relevancy (*saṁgati*) [*viśayo viśayaścaiva pūrvapakṣastathottaram / nirṇayaśceti siddhāntaḥ śāstre'dhikaraṇam smṛtam* //]. The

(*vāda-prasthāna*).¹⁹¹ The commentaries on the *BhG* can be brought under the former head.

While commenting on the *BhG*, MS has taken into consideration many other commentaries on it, criticizing them whenever he found them antagonistic to his own views. He has also discussed various doctrines of other Indian philosophical schools.¹⁹² In the *GD*, MS does not indulge in hair-splitting argumentation and a dialectical method of presentation as in the *AdS* and *AdRR*. The commentary rather follows the *adhikaraṇa-prasthāna* style to convey the author's catholic outlook, where he takes note of the views held by different sub-schools of the Advaita Vedānta.

MS's *GD* is basically an exposition (*vyākhyā*) of the *BhG*. In order to examine how far the *GD* satisfies the basic criteria to be fulfilled by a proper exposition, it is pertinent to mention some views of reliable authorities in this connection, and judge the *GD* in the light of them.

The *Abhinavabhāratī*, a famous commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharatamuni by Abhinavagupta, describes ten principles that a good commentary must satisfy, (i) declaring the correct reading as the desirable one, (ii) mentioning the readings that are not proper, (iii) explanation of the text commented upon in a clear manner, (iv) solution of (apparent) contradictions, (v) complete and exhaustive elucidation, (vi) following definitions in a proper manner, (vii) consideration of statements that are ambiguous, (viii) indication of relevance, (ix)

Vedāntins put *saṃgati* in the third place and *siddhānta* in the last (*tatra ekaikamadhikaraṇaṃ pañcāvayavaṃ, viśayaḥ sandehaḥ saṃgatiḥ pūrvapakṣaḥ siddhāntaśca*) [Apte 1965: pp. 43-4].

¹⁹¹ 'Debate' (*vāda*) is one of the sixteen subjects held by the Naiyāyikas (e.g. means of right knowledge, object of right knowledge etc.). It is a kind of polemical discussion aiming at obtaining the truth (See Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. I, p. 294).

¹⁹² See chapters 6.2-6.5 infra.

justification of (apparent) repetition, and (x) summing up in brief the result of such analysis.¹⁹³ Vaidyanātha Pāyagūṇḍe (ca. 18th century CE), the author of the *Chāyā*, a gloss on Nāgeśa's *Uddyota*, which is a sub-commentary on Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, quotes the *Parāśara Upapurāṇa*, and says that any commentary must (i) isolate the individual terms after disjoining the euphonic combination (*sandhi*), (ii) expound word-meanings, (iii) explain compound words (*samāsa*), (iv) state the meaning of the complete sentence, (v) anticipate possible objections and (vi) provide the solutions and answers to these.¹⁹⁴

MS's commentary meets all of these criteria for a well-executed and effective commentary. While commenting on the *BhG*, MS mentions a number of different readings of the text, often explaining the existing one as consistent with them or giving his own explanation for them (the *GD* on *BhG* 1.46, 8.16, 9.21, 11.8, 11.17, 11.37, 11.40, 13.20, 14.25, 15.5 etc.). He also declares the correct or different reading of the text as the desirable one (the *GD* on *BhG* 11.21, 14.23 etc.). In some places, he has pointed out the redundancy of the word employed in the verse, as the idea sought to be conveyed is already contained in another word employed in the same verse (the *GD* on *BhG* 18.55 etc.). MS often explains the terms employed in the verse clearly to explicate the intent of the verse (the *GD* on *BhG* 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 6.2, 6.40, 11.46 etc.). He also gives the etymological meaning and grammatical nuances of the word employed in the verses of the text (the *GD* on *BhG* 3.18, 6.48, 11.8 etc.). MS often sums up the intent of the verses at the end of their explanation (the *GD* on *BhG* 1.11, 16.17 etc.). In some places, MS justifies his

¹⁹³ *upādeyasya sampāthastadanyasya pratīkanam / sphūṭavyākhyā virodhānāṃ parihārah supūrṇatā // lakṣānusaraṇaṃ śliṣṭavaktavyānaṃ vivecanam / saṅgatiḥ paunaruktyānāṃ samādhānasamākulam // saṅgrahaścetyaḥ vyākhyāprakāro'tra samāśritaḥ // (Nāṭyaśāstra 1956: Verses 5-7a, pp. 1-2).*

¹⁹⁴ *padachedaḥ padārthaśca vighraho vākyayojanā / ākṣepaśca samādhānaṃ vyākhyānaṃ ṣaḍvidhaṃ matam // (Mahābhāṣya 1938: Vol. 1, introductory verse 11, Chāyā, p. 2).*

own explanation to the preference of the prevailing one (the *GD* on *BhG* 2.39 etc.), and in others, he gives a complete and exhaustive explanation (the *GD* on *BhG* 6.15, 6.25, 6.26, 6.28 etc.). He defines the terms employed in the verses (the *GD* on *BhG* 7.11, 8.1, 9.22, 10.40, 11.5, 11.36, 11.38, 14.27 etc.). He mentions the relevance of the explanation of a particular expression in a certain verse, so as not to contradict the remaining part of that verse or the following verse (the *GD* on *BhG* 2.48, 10.4, 13.19 etc.). He also gives explanation why the euphonic combination (*sandhi*) is maintained in a verse where it may not be necessary and vice versa (the *GD* on *BhG* 11.44, 12.8 etc.). He also anticipates why some other term or expression is not used in the verse instead of the one employed therein, and gives reason for that (the *GD* on *BhG* 10.18 etc.). In some places, MS gives reason for using (or not using) the compound (*samāsa*) in the text (the *GD* on *BhG* 13.12 etc.), anticipates the probable objections, and replies to them (the *GD* on *BhG* 2.13, 2.15, 2.16, 2.18 etc.).

Thus, we may conclude that the *GD* exhibits all the above-mentioned classic features that are the hallmarks of a proper commentary. A commentator of high calibre always wants to provide some novel explanation of the text that he is commenting on, and perhaps this is why he has differed from Śaṅkara in some cases, or even construed the text of the *BhG* in a different way in some cases (e.g. reading ‘*hi mahānubhavān*’ in *BhG* 2.5 as ‘*himahānubhāvān*’).

Dharamarāja Adhvarīndra (16th century CE) in his *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* (*VP*) points out that two types of word-meaning (*padārtha*) are generally admitted in Advaita, viz. denotative or primary meaning (*vāc्यārtha* or *mukhyārtha*) and implied or secondary meaning (*lakṣyārtha* or *gauṇārtha*).¹⁹⁵ In addition, there is the third

¹⁹⁵ See Mādhavānanda 1997: p. 93 ff.

type called suggested meaning (*vyāṅgyārtha*), which is admitted by some grammarians and rhetoricians (*ālankārika-s*), and which is supposed to be present in the works of great poets. In the *VKL*, while describing various functions of the word (*śabda-vṛtti*), and in his interpretation of the *BhG*, MS has hinted at the admissibility of this third type of word-meaning.¹⁹⁶

Throughout the *BhG*, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna have addressed each other using different names [for Lord Kṛṣṇa, ‘*Mahābāho*’ in *BhG* 6.35, 6.38, 11.23, 18.1 etc.; ‘*Kṛṣṇa*’ in *BhG* 17.1 etc.; ‘*Keśiniśūdana*’ in *BhG* 18.1 etc.; ‘*Hṛṣikeṣa*’ in *BhG* 18.1 etc.; and for Arjuna, ‘*Paraṃtapa*’ in *BhG* 4.5 etc.; ‘*Arjuna*’ in *BhG* 4.5 etc.; ‘*Bharatasattama*’ in *BhG* 18.4 etc.; ‘*Puruṣavyāghra*’ in *BhG* 18.4 etc.]. In the *GD*, MS not only explains the role played by conjunction like ‘but’ (*tu*), ‘and’ (*ca*), but also explains the appropriateness of these different names in their context. For example, in *BhG* 4.5, Arjuna has been addressed both as ‘*Arjuna*’ and ‘*Paraṃtapa*’. MS comments that as ‘*Arjuna*’ is also the name of a tree, which is covered by bark, so also Arjuna’s power of understanding is covered by nescience, while he is called ‘the slayer of enemies’ (*paraṃtapa*) because he is deluded by the sense of difference (*bheda-dṛṣṭi*) to kill others as his foes. Thus, these two words convey two aspects of nescience, covering (*āvaraṇa*) and distorting or projecting (*vikṣepa*) respectively.¹⁹⁷ As we have discussed earlier, nescience is said to possess both powers: concealment (*āvaraṇa-śakti*), which covers the real nature of the object (i.e. *brahman*), and projection (*vikṣepa-śakti*), which creates the illusion of multiple objects, whereas in fact there is only one undivided entity (*brahman*). These two kinds of power of nescience are obviously not the primary meanings of the terms

¹⁹⁶ Karmarkar 1962: pp. 77-9.

¹⁹⁷ See *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 186 and chapter 4.2.1 *infra*.

‘*Arjuna*’ and ‘*Param̐tapa*’ respectively. They are not also the implied meanings of these two terms (i.e. ‘*Arjuna*’ and ‘*Param̐tapa*’), since the implied meaning of an expression is admitted only when there is any inconsistency (*anupapatti*) in understanding the relevant expression, and that is not the case here. It is a distinctive approach on MS’s part to make a philosophical point using the suggested meaning (*vyāṅgyārtha*) of the word, as distinct from its denotative or primary meaning (*vācyārtha* or *mukhyārtha*) and implied or secondary meaning (*lakṣyārtha* or *gauṇārtha*). It may be kept in mind that the *BhG* is a part of the *MBh*, the great epic of India, and admitting suggested meanings in its verses seems perfectly appropriate.

Regarding the method of exposition of the *BhG*, MS has shown some novelty as well. It has been a tradition among the traditional commentators of the *BhG* to divide the text into three parts taking six chapters each. Prior commentators such as Yāmuna and Rāmānuja, as well later ones like Keśava Kāśmīri Bhaṭṭa and Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri, have divided the *BhG* into three parts (*kāṇḍa*-s), dealing with *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna* respectively. MS has also divided the *BhG* in the same manner, but what is novel is that he sees an Advaita message even in this structure, by taking these three parts of the text as representing the three words of the Upaniṣadic great sentence ‘That thou art’ (*tattvamasi*’, *CU* 6.8.7) [while viewing the *BhG*, this Upaniṣadic text should be in the form of ‘Thou art that’]. As we have pointed out earlier, this idea of explaining the *BhG* as an explanation of this Upaniṣadic text has been pointed out also by Ānandagiri in one of the concluding verses of his commentary on the *BhG*. Thus, while we find Ānandagiri’s influence

on MS in this connection, it is to be noted that a detailed exposition of the *BhG* in accordance with this Upaniṣadic text is MS's own idea.¹⁹⁸

1.8. Note on translation

Unless otherwise specified, all translations and summaries are our own. We have translated MS literally only on few occasions, though we have paraphrased him when required. Furthermore, all quotations from the Upaniṣads, *BhG*, and the *BS* are from the translations of Patrick Olivelle, J. A. B. van Buitenen, and Swami Gambhirananda respectively.

¹⁹⁸ See chapters 3.1.2, 3.1.4 *infra*.

Available Modern Scholarship on Madhusūdana Sarasvatī

2.1. General overview

Due to his immense contribution to the development of Advaita Vedānta, MS's works have received some degree of scholarly attention. Encyclopaedic surveys of Indian philosophies, anthologies, translations and scholarly articles provide some general information on the life and philosophy of MS, with varying levels of detail, in introductory chapters and footnotes.

The present study is primarily concerned with philosophical rather than historical issues. That is, MS's treatment of basic Advaitic concepts and of devotion (within those Advaitic parameters) in his *GD*. Accordingly, the criterion for our review of prior scholarship on MS will be its relevance for the study of the *GD*. Thus, instead of organising the review chronologically, we will organise them by theme and text. As many works available in Indian languages (e.g. Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali) contribute significantly to our understanding, we have included some of them.

With regard to the determination of MS's date, his works, and his biography within its socio-historical context, there have been various efforts since the second quarter of the last century. Scholars such as Telang (1886), Shastri (1912), Farquhar (1925), Divanji (1927, 1928), Chattopadhyaya (1927, 1928), Tadpatrikar (1927), Sastri (1928), Chakravarti (1928, 1930), Bhattacharya (1937), Ray (1938-39), Sarma (1941), Jagadiswarananda (1941), Nachane (1949), Kātre (1950), K. H.

Potter (2001), Rajagopalan (2003), and Nelson (2007) may be mentioned in this connection.

In the second volume of his great work on Indian philosophy, Dasgupta (2000-07) states that MS may have been born in the first half of the 16th century CE, and provides a list of works that may be ascribed to him with a high degree of probability. In the course of evaluating MS's philosophical views, he writes, 'It is, however, interesting to note that, though he was such a confirmed monist in his philosophy, he was a theist in his religion and followed the path of *bhakti*, or devotion, as is evidenced by his numerous works promulgating the *bhakti* creed.' While reviewing MS's *VKL*, which compares doctrines of other Indian philosophical schools with those of the Vedānta in more detail than his other works, Dasgupta concludes that MS is guilty of misinterpretation when he asserts that the Advaita Vedāntic notion of salvation supersedes all other views.¹⁹⁹ In his fourth volume, Dasgupta offers a lengthy discussion of issues such as the falsity of the world, the nature of knowledge and the world as illusion, as discussed in the *AdS*, *Nyāyāmṛta* of Vyāsa Tīrtha (15th century CE) and the *Taraṅginī* of Rāma Tīrtha (ca. 16th century CE).²⁰⁰

Radhakrishnan (2009), in the second volume of *Indian Philosophy*, includes MS as an important post-Śaṅkara Advaitin, belonging to the 16th century.²⁰¹ Banerji (2004) presents an anthology on Sanskrit works and their authors, especially of those which were either written in Bengal or influenced its cultural history. In the context of prominent Vedānta philosophers, a brief biographical note on MS and a

¹⁹⁹ Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, pp. 226-7.

²⁰⁰ MS's *AdS* contains a word-by-word criticism of the *Nyāyāmṛta*, while the *Taraṅginī* is a word-by-word criticism of the *AdS* (See Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. IV, chapters XXIX and XXX, pp. 204-319).

²⁰¹ Radhakrishnan 2009: Vol. II, footnote 15, pp. 419-20.

discussion of his *magnum opus* the *AdS* has been provided. MS is said to have flourished in the first half of the 16th century CE.

Nachane (2000) offers an extensive survey of major post-Śāṃkara Advaita writers up to 18th century CE and treats MS's biography and works. The date of MS, according to the author, is ca. 1540-1645 CE. After giving a short summary of each of MS's important works, Nachane states the doctrinal conclusions as set forth in the *SB* and *VKL* respectively. This author affirms that MS's treatment of *bhakti* does not contradict Advaita views, supporting this conclusion with copious quotations from MS's *VKL*, *GD* and *SŚSS*.²⁰²

Mahadevan (1938), while giving a systematic exposition of the Advaita philosophy with special reference to Bhāratīrtha Vidyāraṇya (15th century CE), mentions that Bhāratīrtha recommended a moderate means towards attainment of liberation. Mahadevan refers to MS in this context briefly to show that Bhāratīrtha's point finds support in MS's treatment of devotion. He observes:

The tendency to liberalise Advaita reached another stage in Madhusūdana who was the first to claim that the path of devotion (*bhakti*) leads to non-dual realization. ...He accepts the *Bhāgavata* view that of the two paths, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, the latter is superior, since it leads to the goal more quickly than the other. ...Whether we agree with him or not in bestowing on *bhakti* the importance which he gives it, we cannot but admire the catholicity of spirit which animates his exposition of Advaita (*sic*).²⁰³

Rao (1980) has devoted a brief chapter on MS entitled 'Sri Madhusudana Saraswathi & Advaita Bhakti,' in connection with the discussion of different Vedāntic issues in his *Advaita Vedanta: Problems and Perspectives*. The author holds that though a synthesis of monistic philosophy with devotion is not generally found in works of the Advaita Vedānta, there is no intrinsic contradiction in the

²⁰² Nachane 2000: pp. 286-94.

²⁰³ Mahadevan 1938: p. 251-2.

acceptance of the path of devotion by the Advaitins; for Śaṃkara's acceptance of *bhakti* as a purificatory means is also consistent with the presence of this element in his personal life. Rao provides a short biographical detail of MS, dating him to the middle of the 16th century CE, and highlights the uniqueness of how MS synthesizes philosophizing about *bhakti* with the Advaita doctrines. Following the *BP*, MS terms *bhakti* a mental mode (*manogati*) of a devotee, which is like a constant flow towards the Lord. When the mind is melted, the *bhagavān* becomes reflected in it like a reflection in a mirror, thereby assuming the form of the *bhagavān*. Thus, Rao concludes that, 'What Madhusūdana did for the thinking world was to remove the misconception that Advaita is opposed to *bhakti*, for the internal and essential spring of *bhakti* is *drawing together* and not repelling, and if openness is not the basic truth this would not happen (*sic*).'²⁰⁴

Kattackal (1982) in his *Religion and ethics in Advaita* has devoted a short chapter on MS. Following the views of modern scholars such as S. N. Dasgupta, V. Rajagopalan, P. M. Modi, Eliot Deutsch, J. A. B. van Buitenen, and Sanjukta Gupta, the author highlights MS's attempt at showing (i) the effectiveness of the path of devotion (*bhakti-mārga*) to be on a par with that of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*), (ii) the nature of liberation (*mokṣa*) and the means to its attainment, (iii) the utility of the Upaniṣadic great sentences (*mahāvākya*-s) in relation to the process of hearing (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*) and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*) as the means to liberation, (iv) various stages towards the attainment of liberation and its grades with special reference to the *YV*, (v) the nature and stages of devotion with special reference to the *BP*, (vi) the notion of devotion as depicted in the *BhG* in

²⁰⁴ Rao 1980: pp. 201-205.

contrast to that of Śaṃkara, (vii) amalgamation of the way of knowledge with that of devotion etc.²⁰⁵ He also fixes MS's time as the first half of the 16th century CE. In short, Kattackal's assessments of MS as stated above are solely based on those of the modern scholars mentioned above.

In his *Whither Indian Philosophy: Essays on Indian and Western Epistemology*, Pandey (1978) has emphasised the importance of identifying an author's references to his own works throughout his corpus. Pandey calls this the method of self-reference. And in order to explain this method, Pandey has chosen MS and cited in a tabular form as many as twenty nine passages from his (MS's) various works together with the work/s mentioned in those passages, and the topic referred to therein. After examining the important topics referred to by MS in his various works, Pandeya enumerates fourteen doctrines as the principal contributions of MS.²⁰⁶ These touch upon all the most important tenets of Advaita, such as distinction between reality and unreality, the falsity of the world and the reality of *brahman*, along with a refutation of dualism, the nature, scope and inter-relationships of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, as well as a reconciliation of *bhakti* and *jñāna*. Pandey discusses how all these doctrines developed in MS's personal journey as a devotee, a debater and a philosopher of the highest caliber. Pandey has then shown the utility of this method of self-reference as a research method in exploring the development of philosophers of ancient times, particularly for those with multiple works to their credit.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Kattackal 1982: pp. 193-9.

²⁰⁶ Pandey 1978: pp. 89-92, 95.

²⁰⁷ Pandey 1978: pp. 99-101.

The only extensive monograph on MS available to us is that of Gupta (2006).²⁰⁸ In addition to a short biographical detail and works of MS in the introductory chapter, the author discusses all the major philosophical issues -- metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical -- on the basis of a thorough study of MS's works. Having given a short but solid account of the philosophical and religious milieu of MS and its influence on his distinctive philosophical stance, the author provides a tentative biography and bibliography based on the views of various scholars and textual sources. Since the *AdS* is the masterpiece of MS, Gupta takes it as the basis for determining the authenticity of his other works and presenting his general philosophical standpoint.

The various aspects of the Advaita theory of nescience (*avidyā/ajñāna*), as formulated in MS's *AdS*, are discussed in the second chapter of Gupta's work. In the third chapter, MS's views on epistemology are discussed. The nature, types and origination of valid knowledge are described here in detail with the answers to the opponents' objections. In chapter four, the nature of *brahman* and the establishment of the supremacy of the unqualified *brahman* (as opposed to the contention of the dualist Vedāntins that the qualified *brahman* is the highest reality) have been argued by Gupta with evidence from MS's works, thereby showing how MS refutes the rival views of Madhva, Rāmānuja etc. Gupta has analysed, in Chapter Five, MS's examination of various causal theories, as well as his exposition of the Advaita views on *jīva*, *īśvara*, and *sākṣin*, in relation to *brahman* and the primordial ignorance. The status of the created world, different opposing causal theories that

²⁰⁸ Gupta (2006) is a revised edition of a 1966 edition.

have been discussed and refuted by MS, the nature of liberation and the different stages leading to it have been taken up in chapters six and seven of Gupta's work.

Having given a detailed exposition of MS's basic philosophical stance, Gupta discusses in the final chapter of her work, MS's notion of *bhakti*. The factors that may have been important in shaping MS's view in this regard become explicit in Gupta's following observations:

He obviously knew Śrī Caitanya's teachings as well as the teachings of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (*BhP*). In his exposition on *bhakti* in the *Bhakti-rasāyana* he used the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as his scriptural source and illustrated each of his views with extensive quotations from the text...Probably he was familiar with the exposition of *bhakti* in the *Muktāphala* by Vopadeva along with Hemādri's commentary...he still followed Rāmānuja's *bhakti-yoga* or *upāsanā* in his attempt to define *bhakti*. However, his personal feeling was clearly always closer to the passionate love for Gopāla Kṛṣṇa than to the sedate *bhakti-yoga* of the earlier Pāñcarātra tradition.²⁰⁹

In order to substantiate this, Gupta sketches a brief historical development of *bhakti* according to the *BP*, *Bhaktisūtra*-s, and the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava thought, leading to the conclusion that MS's notions of *bhakti*, which are largely found in his *BhR*, are based mainly on the *BP*. Sporadic references to MS's *GD*, *SB*, *AdS* and *VKL* have also been made in this context in order to delineate a comprehensive view of devotion as described by MS.

In this connection, Gupta's positive assessment of MS's attempt at synchronizing devotionism with the non-dualistic views is noteworthy. She maintains:

So to gain a complete picture of Madhusūdana's achievement it is imperative to discuss both these aspects. He proves that monistic metaphysics and devotionism go hand in hand in the search for perfection and unlimited bliss...His originality is most advantageously expressed in his exposition of the *BhG*...That is why, in spite of being a great non-dualist Vedāntin, Madhusūdana admits the paradox of his personality.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Gupta 2006: pp. 119-20.

²¹⁰ Gupta 2006: pp. 142-4.

2.2. Early works of Madhusūdana

2.2.1. *Samkṣepaśārīrakasārasaṃgraha*

Giri (2007) contains Hindi translations of both the *SS* and MS's exposition on it called the *SSSS*, along with the Sanskrit originals. Apart from a detailed introduction to both works, the translator has added his own explanations in the body of the translation.

2.2.2. *Vedāntakalpalatikā*

This work has been edited and translated by Karmarkar (1962). The detailed introduction describes MS's biographical details and his works, a summary of the *VKL* and its critical appreciation. Deutsch and Buitenen (1971), in *A Source Book of Advaita Vedānta*, have selected some portions from this work, observing that, 'Madhusūdana is often credited with being the first to reconcile fully the metaphysical principles of Advaita with the path of *bhakti*, of devotion to a personal deity.'²¹¹

Panicker (1995) has made a study of the *VKL*. His introduction clearly states why a study of MS is relevant in present-day discussion of Indian philosophies.

In the 16th century, the influence of the *bhakti* movement became very decisive among the scholars and laymen alike. The absolutistic philosophy of Śaṅkara did not satisfy the theistic thirst of the people. Some sort of philosophic compromise was the need of the hour to uphold Absolute Monism. Madhusūdana Sarasavati comes to the scene in this historical juncture. With his subtle reasoning and logical arguments he resisted the theistic attack on Advaita of Śaṅkara effectively. But to keep up the absolutistic theory intact without deviating from the main track, Madhusūdana boldly introduced the element of *bhakti* within the monistic thinking. It is not at all surrender to the theistic schools, but a bold attempt to uphold the individuality of Advaita Vedānta. The concept of *bhakti* introduced by Madhusūdana is also different from the one propagated by Rāmānuja, Madhva and Caitanya. It has its roots in the theoretical Advaita. ...Here rests the importance of Madhusūdana who had cut a new path within Advaita, the path of *jñāna-bhakti* synthesis (*sic*).²¹²

²¹¹ Deutsch and Buitenen 1971: p. 288.

²¹² Panicker 1995: Introduction, pp. xviii-xix.

Part I of the work introduces MS, his works, and the *VKL* in detail, while the author makes a thorough textual analysis of the *VKL* in part II of this work, which also discusses the concept of liberation in Advaita Vedānta (the central topic of the *VKL*) and its establishment by discarding opposing views, along with other related concepts [namely, knowledge and nescience, inability of the significative force of a word (*śabda-vṛtti*) for producing the realisation of *brahman* and correct understanding of the Upaniṣadic passages as the means of attaining liberation]. Part III of this work contains general observations based on the previous discussions.

2.2.3. *Siddhāntabindu*

Modi (1985) is a reprint of a 1929 English translation of the *SB*. In his introduction, Modi has critically analysed the date and works of MS with support from various textual sources. He assumes the time of MS to be from about 1490 to 1580 CE.²¹³ MS's special contribution to Śaṅkara's Advaita philosophy is described, based especially on the *GD*, *BhR* and other devotional works. Modi's observations in this regard may be cited below.

As regards the special contribution of Madhusudana to the Sankara Vedanta, it may be noted that inspite of his being a follower of Sankara's monism, he was an ardent devotee of Sri Krishna. To Madhusudana, this was neither self-contradictory nor surprising. He could show by a careful examination of the Bhagavata Purana that the metaphysics of Sankara and the ethics of Vallabha can be combined together to form a religio-philosophical system. ... Just as in the days of Kumarila Bhatta and Sankara the most important problem was the reconciliation of Karma and Jnana, so in the days of Madhusudana and Vallabha the greatest problem was that of Jnana and Bhakti. The question had already drawn the attention of Bopadeva, Vidyaranya and Sridhara but it was left to Madhusudana to solve thoroughly and inculcate a new line of thought in the Sankara Vedanta (*sic*).²¹⁴

Critical analysis of all the available works of MS in the introduction of this work throws light on MS's literary acumen. Besides the translation of the *SB*, Modi

²¹³ Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 1.

²¹⁴ Modi 1985: Introduction, pp. 12-3.

has added, in the Appendices, some very informative, if uncritical, discussion on the devotional sentiment of MS.²¹⁵ Modi's conclusion at the end of Appendix III on 'Madhusudana and Sankara on Bhaktimarga in Gita' is pertinent to the ascertainment of the influence of Śaṅkara's *Gītā* commentary on that of MS;

Thus although Madhusudana was a disciple of Śaṅkara, he differed widely from Śaṅkara and his followers. As distinguished from the latter, Madhusudana re-established the exact meaning of certain verses of the Bhagavad Gīta, inspite of the fact that he was bound down by Śaṅkara's interpretation which he always kept before him when he wrote his own commentary on the Gīta, that according to Śaṅkara there are only two Paths mentioned in the B.G. but Madhusudana emphatically stated that there are three Paths to absolution discussed in the B.G. and that in his opinion the Path of Devotion was as good as that of Knowledge and as such he himself followed that Path, though he did not adversely criticise the Jñānamarga (*sic*).²¹⁶

Divānji (1933) has critically edited and translated the *SB* into English with critical notes and explanations, as also a detailed biographical account, including a genealogical chart²¹⁷ provided by someone who seems to have belonged to MS's family lineage. Divānji concludes that MS flourished during 1540-1647 CE and provides an account of the historical development of the Advaita Vedānta prior to this time. This edition also contains a Sanskrit commentary on the *SB* by Puruṣottama Sarasvatī, called the *Bindusandīpana*.

Acalānanda (1981), Subramanian (1989) and Sastri (2006) are the more notable recent English translations of the *SB*, including the Sanskrit original. Explanatory notes by all these translators contain much useful material about MS and his thought. Pant (1932) is a Hindi translation of the *SB* by an anonymous translator, with a lengthy introduction and notes, recently re-edited by Giri (2002). Śāstri (1334 Bengali Era) is a Bengali translation of the *SB* that also contains one of the original Sanskrit commentaries on it called the *Nyāyaratnāvalī* by Brahmānanda

²¹⁵ Modi 1985: Appendix II and Appendix III, pp. 156-75.

²¹⁶ Modi 1985: Appendix III, p. 175.

²¹⁷ Divānji 1933: Introduction, p. xvi.

Sarasvatī. Cidghanānanda (1995) is a critical edition of the *SB* along with a Bengali translation and explanations based on Sanskrit commentaries on the *SB*.

2.3. Dialectical works against Nyāya and Dvaita Vedānta

2.3.1. *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa*

Yogendrānandagiri (1977) has translated the *AdRR* of MS into Hindi. Besides the translation, explanatory notes on intricate passages are of immense help in understanding the import of the text, which is as technically polemic in nature as the *AdS*.

2.3.2. *Advaitasiddhi*

Compared to other works of MS, his *AdS* has been studied in greater detail and translated often in modern scholarship. Ghoṣa (1931) is a valuable translation into Bengali of the latest commentary on the *AdS* (up to the section on ‘falsity of falsity’ of its 1st chapter), called the *Bālabodhinī*, composed in the early 20th century by Mm. Yogendranātha Tarkasāṃkhyavedāntatīrtha. The introduction gives a detailed account of MS with the support of different legends against the socio-historical background, suggesting the period between 1525/30-1632/37 CE as his probable date.²¹⁸ Though the introduction does not separate history from legend, it points to reliable sources for obtaining biographical details of MS. Apart from the translation and notes on the first definition of falsity by the translator together with the text, the editor has provided a detailed introduction with a historical development of the Advaita Vedānta from the Vedic period down to the time of publication. The text of the *Nyāyāmṛta*, up to the refutation of first definition of falsity in the *AdS* is also

²¹⁸ Ghoṣa 1931: *Advaitasiddhibhūmikā*, p. 115.

given in the appendix. Thus, this work has made this portion of the *AdS* more accessible to scholars.

Jha (1990) provides an English translation of the first chapter of the *AdS*. Though the language is dated, this translation is of immense help in understanding the textual part covered here. Besides, the translator has provided a synopsis at the beginning of each topic, following the *Advaitasiddhisiddhāntasāra* of Sadānanda Vyāsa (16th Century CE). Bhattacharya (1992) has translated into English five definitions of falsity together with the concept of the falsity of falsity (named *Mithyātvāsāmānyopapatti*), from the first chapter of the *AdS*. The preface pinpoints what the word ‘falsity’ really means for the Advaitins, in contrast to Western philosophy and the Nyāya. Translations are followed by the Sanskrit texts and detailed explanatory notes on each of the six topics.²¹⁹ Pereira (1991) has a partial English translation of the *AdS*, as part of an anthology of important Hindu texts. Swaminathan (2001) has paraphrased the entire *AdS* by mentioning the core textual statements from each of the hundred and eight topics, besides giving their English translations. Apart from a brief introduction to the *AdS* and its author in the introduction and sporadic notes next to the translations, Swaminathan has also given notes on Indian Logic (Nyāya) and Sanskrit Grammar in his appendices. Raychaudhuri (1955) has made a study of the concept of falsity following the *AdS* of MS. This author delineates the views about the self as held in the Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, and Advaita philosophies as well as the concept of falsity. Out of the five definitions of falsity described in the *AdS*, three have been discussed by this author.

²¹⁹ Bhattacharya 1992: pp. vii-ix, xiii-xxiii.

Śāstrī (1963) in his *Vedāntadarśana-Advaitavāda*, has devoted a section on MS. Apart from giving biographical details and an account of MS's works, the author has summarised the basic philosophical stance of MS, as found in *AdS*. He also thinks that the period from the last quarter of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century may be the life period of MS. Singh (1966) has written a doctoral dissertation on MS's justification for Advaita metaphysics, mainly following the discussion in the *AdS*, with occasional references to his other works. A table of cross references found in various works of MS and his enumeration of as many as fourteen principal doctrines of MS are useful scholarly aids. Chakraborty (1967) refers to the concept of falsity based on the *AdS* and its commentary by Brahmānanda Sarasvatī. Besides a detailed introduction on why and how the concept of falsity is necessary for the Advaitic discourse, the author has examined in the rest of the work all the five definitions of falsity and also the notion of the falsity of falsity.

Nair (1990) has prepared a brief but very coherent and systematic study of the *AdS*. Apart from a bird's eye view on Indian philosophical schools, especially the Vedānta system, the author gives biographical details of MS, based on textual evidence and the views of other scholars. Nair holds that MS flourished between the second half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries CE. The discussion provides an introduction to the *Siddhi* literature in the Advaita tradition, in which the *AdS* occupies a central place, and the historical development of controversy between the dualist and non-dualist Vedāntic thought, from the time of Bādarāyaṇa to that of Madhva and his followers. After a critical study of the *AdS* and its

available commentaries, Nair concludes that MS is mainly a follower of the *Vivarāṇa-prasthāna*, who initiated a branch of monistic theism within this school.

Mishra (1990) has studied Advaita epistemology with special reference to the *AdS*. The Advaita Vedānta, unlike other systems of philosophy, accepts a method of knowledge in so far as empirical truth is concerned, but also tries to transcend all methods. After a survey of how epistemological problems are handled in Advaita, Mishra critically examines all five definitions of falsity and that of the falsity of falsity in the *AdS*, which invariably proves the falsity of the world. He touches upon Western views as well whenever necessary in the course of his discussion, quoting copiously from MS and other Advaitic writers, noting that

From the survey of *Advaita* epistemology as given by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and supported by other preceptors of *Advaita*, it may be concluded that the primary aim of *Advaita* epistemology is to prove the falsity of the world. It does not aim at devising methods to comprehend Reality but tries to transcend them. Thus, the problem of the world are not solved but are dissolved. It leads us to a point where the problems of the world are no more pertinent but become utterly meaningless. They are only discussed by way of establishing the truth of non-duality.²²⁰

Devī (1994) has made a study in Hindi on the *AdS*. In addition to biographical details and the discussions on falsity, the author highlights the place of reasoning (*tarka*) in the works of Śaṅkara and post-Śaṅkara writers, with special reference to the *AdS* as compared to other authors before MS, along with a detailed note on the treatment of *bhakti* in MS's works.

Sharma (1994-99) has made a critical analysis based on passages from the *Nyāyāmṛta* and *AdS*. While the first part of it deals with textual sources from both these texts, the second part is concerned with Upaniṣadic sentences like '*tattvamasi*' and other Advaita *śruti*-s in relation to the views of the Mādhva school. Sharma's re-appraisal makes clearer the presentation of the *AdS* as a criticism of the dualistic

²²⁰ Mishra 1990: p. 201

school of Madhva, of which Sharma himself is an authority.²²¹ Similarly, Anantakrishna Sastri's *Nyāyāmṛtādvaitasiddhī* (1984) provides a lengthy introduction in English, with a detailed account of MS, the *AdS* and all its related texts and their authors.²²²

Fort (1998), in the course of discussing the concept of living liberation (*jīvanmukti*) as admitted in traditional Advaita Vedānta, has discussed views expressed in the *AdS*. According to MS, *jīvanmukti* is due to the continuity of some trace of ignorance, even though ignorance itself has been destroyed. Nelson (1996) may also be consulted in this connection.

Pellegrini (2011) has analysed the second and fourth definitions of falsity given in the *AdS*, which initially appear to be mere reiterations of one another. After a thorough textual analysis of both the definitions following MS and his commentators and subcommentators, the author has concluded that, as all five definitions of falsity in the *AdS* convey the same ontological status of falsity, they are to be treated as equal in their literal sense (*vācyārtha*) but different in intended senses (*tātparya*). Pellegrini asserts that MS, while responding to his opponents in this regard, has kept this distinction in mind.²²³

2.4. Devotional works of Madhusūdana

2.4.1. *Kṛṣṇakutūhalanāṭaka*

Diwanji (1931-32) has written an article on the *KKN* of MS. After scrutinizing a manuscript of it, the author felt the urgent need of its publication and appealed to other scholars for preparing a critical edition of the text in order to validate its

²²¹ Sharma 1994-99.

²²² *Nyāyāmṛtādvaitasiddhī* 1984: Introduction, pp. 1-95.

²²³ Pellegrini 2011: pp. 441-2 and 457-8.

authorship,²²⁴ though Diwanji himself left no stone unturned to substantiate his view in the article. A short summary of the entire text has also been provided by the author.

2.4.2. *Mahimnastotraṭīkā* including *Prasthānabheda*

A portion of MS's *ṭīkā* on the seventh verse of the *Mahimnastotra* is called the *Prasthānabheda* (*PB*) and is often discussed independently. Max Müller (2008) in *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* has made an appraisal of the *PB*, with extracts of MS's views on the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy. Müller bases much of his discussion of these schools on his paraphrase of the concluding ideas of the *PB*,²²⁵ observing that

What the Brāhmanas themselves thought of their philosophical literature we may learn even from such modern treatises as the *Prasthāna-bheda*... But it shows at all events a certain freedom of thought, which we see now and then in other writers also, such as Vijñānabhikṣu, who are bent on showing that there is behind the diversity of Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, and Nyāya one and the same truth, though differently expressed; that philosophers, in fact, may be many, but truth is one (*sic*).²²⁶

MS says at the beginning of the *PB* that all *śāstra*-s, directly or indirectly, have the Lord as their purport. The conclusion of the *PB* asserts that all the *prasthāna*-s (lines of thought) that have been discussed are meant to establish the non-dual supreme God. Hanneder (1999) has taken this as a guide in showing the unique character of Hinduism in accommodating both rigidity and flexibility in doctrine, highlighting its mechanisms of adaptation and conservatism. He observes;

One work that is often mentioned in this context is Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's (16th century) *Prasthānabheda*, which addresses the issue of integrating various religious and philosophical systems within the framework of Vedism and would therefore hold as a forerunner for a modern conceptualisation of Hinduism. Moreover this brief tract on the scriptural sources of knowledge (*prasthāna*), has been one of the first texts known to

²²⁴ Diwanji 1931-32: pp. 15-6.

²²⁵ Max Müller 2008: pp. 74-84.

²²⁶ Max Müller 2008: pp. 75 and 82 (diacritics used uniformly).

Western Sanskritists to present a conspectus of the religious and philosophical literature of the “Great Tradition” within Hinduism.²²⁷

Hanneder discusses whether the *PB* is an independent work of MS inserted into the *MST* or an extract from it, but does not provide a concrete answer to this issue.

Śarmā (2001) has made a translation of the *MST* into Hindi that also seeks to explicate the intent of particular words and sentences as parenthetical comments. Sengupta (1339 Bengali Era) is a translation of the *PB* into Bengali. The preface of the translator gives brief biographical details of MS, along with a discussion of how this text came to light and influenced western scholars to undertake studies of Hinduism and its texts.²²⁸ Informative footnotes in the translation, together with information in appendices about source books on the eighteen kinds of learning (*aṣṭādaśa-vidyā*) cited by MS open a window to a wide Vedic literary lore. Śarmā (1989) has published the text of the *PB* with a simple Hindi explanation. The foreword throws some general light on MS and his work.

2.4.3. *Bhaktirasāyana*

This is the only available independent treatise on devotion by a staunch Advaitin. It has been edited and translated into Bengali by Sāṃkhya-Vedāntatīrtha (1404 Bengali Era). The *bhakti-sūtra*-s, i.e. aphorisms on the nature of devotion, ascribed to sages like Śāṇḍilya and Nārada discuss the nature of *bhakti* or devotion, but the doctrines upheld in such texts have been stated very briefly, without adequate and sophisticated philosophical argument in favour of these doctrines. In contrast, the treatment of *bhakti* in the *BhR* is highly philosophical, since MS has tried to

²²⁷ Hanneder 1999: p. 575.

²²⁸ Sengupta 1389 Bengali Era: *Avataraṇikā*, pp. 15-23.

substantiate his claims with the help of arguments and copious quotations from scriptural texts. In his brief introduction to MS and the *BhR*, Sāṃkhya-Vedāntatīrtha has beautifully outlined this idea. In addition to the translation of each *kārikā* and MS's commentary thereon, in the first *ullāsa*, there are numerous footnotes in Sanskrit. As MS's commentary on the second and third *ullāsa*-s is not available, the translator has provided his own Sanskrit commentary along with its translation into Bengali.

Pāṇḍeya (1998) has translated the *BhR* into Hindi. The prefatory remarks (*prāstāvikam*) in this edition discuss MS's understanding of *bhakti* as presented in the *BhR*, apart from giving an account of life and works of MS.²²⁹ Further, while Pāṇḍeya has given his translations of and notes on MS's commentary on the first *ullāsa*, his own explanations of the second and third *ullāsa*-s of the *BhR* together with notes are found in this work.

In an article on devotional sentiment (*bhakti-rasa*) as discussed in the *BhR*, Kar (2006) has shown how the mind in its different modifications gives rise to devotion. She has paraphrased a few *kārikā*-s from the *BhR* along with MS's commentary on them. A distinction between devotion and knowledge is drawn here. Devotion (*bhakti*) is the transformation of the mind in its melted state into the form of God (*bhagavān*), while knowledge of *brahman* (*brahma-vidyā*) is the mode of the mind in the form of attributeless non-dual *brahman* in its (mind's) non-melted state.²³⁰

Śāstrī (1940), in the course of discussing Indian philosophical views of aesthetics, makes numerous references to the *BhR*. MS's understanding of worldly

²²⁹ Pāṇḍeya 1998: *Prāstāvikam*, pp. 1-11.

²³⁰ Kar 2006: p. 232.

(*laukika*) and transcendental (*alaukika*) pleasures and sorrows,²³¹ his arguments in favour of categorising *bhakti* as a *rasa*, like grief or love and his emphasis on the fact that pleasure brought forth from *bhakti-rasa* is inherently supreme, are but a few examples given by Śāstrī. Chatterjee (1972) in a critical study in Bengali of the development of *bhakti-rasa* in its historical and theoretical milieu has discussed many topics found in the *BhR*. Thus, MS's view that *bhakti-rasa* is superior to all other *rasa*-s, his opinion that pleasure obtained from worldly *rasa*-s is limited and incomplete, while that of *bhakti-rasa* is impartite and complete, his classification of *bhakti-rasa* into pure (*śuddha*) and mixed (*miśra*) have all been examined by Chatterjee, comparing them to the views of the rhetoricians (*Ālaṃkārikas*) and the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas.²³²

A profound study of the *BhR* has been made by Nelson (1986) in his PhD dissertation entitled *Bhakti in Advaita Vedānta: Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's Bhaktirasāyana*. The thesis includes an annotated translation of the first *ullāsa* together with MS's commentary on it. Nelson demonstrates how the concept of *bhakti*, rather than concepts of a personal or impersonal Godhead, gave rise to the dualistic schools of Vedānta that are opposed to Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta. He asserts the importance of MS's position in unequivocal terms: 'He was one of the few traditional writers that sought to integrate *bhakti* and non-dualism in a way that remained true to the strict boundaries to Śaṃkara's system, and the only one to work at this problem systematically.'²³³ Nelson quotes various works of MS bearing evidence of his staunch adherence to Advaita in combination with an outlook that gives great efficacy to devotion. Perhaps the most striking reference is in MS's *AdS*

²³¹ Śāstrī 1940: pp. 199-200, 289-91,

²³² Chatterjee 1972: pp. 62-3, 85-6, 116-7 and 150-53.

²³³ Nelson 1986: pp. 7-8.

(2.7), which is a eulogy to the personal God, placed in a context where MS is primarily engaged in showing the tenability of attributeless *brahman*.²³⁴ Given the attitude taken by MS in his various works, this does not appear as an inconsistency on his part. In order to have a more critical assessment of MS's thought on devotion, Nelson has made an attempt to explore the true import of the *BhR* in its social, historical, philosophical, and religious background. Keeping in mind the view of MS on what he was really seeking to establish in the *BhR*, Nelson follows a historical and preliminary analysis with his translations of the first *ullāsa* of the *BhR* and his critical observations. Nelson highlights the considerable theoretical difficulties that MS had to face in presenting his views in the *BhR*, observing that, 'No matter how convincing Madhusūdana's efforts to establish the experiential superiority of devotion, it is not at all clear that he is successful in demonstrating that it has a greater ontological value than *mokṣa*, or indeed even an equal ontological value.'²³⁵

Nelson also discusses the notion of *bhakti* as found in the *GD* of MS, concluding that as compared to the *BhR*, the final philosophical stance and intent of MS comes through better in the *GD*. The following concluding observations of Nelson are noteworthy while undertaking any critical research on MS.²³⁶

Madhusūdana's writings on *bhakti* represent an important phase of Advaitic thought, one that strains the limits of the system to their utmost, and in the process, raises important questions for the tradition as a whole. It is my feeling that a careful and creative consideration of the problem that Madhusūdana's works raises would make a significant contribution to the ongoing vitality of Advaita in its modern context.²³⁷

Nelson (1989) observes on MS's somewhat paradoxical attitude towards ascetic renunciation and sentimental *bhakti-rasa*: 'A more ascetic, contemplative

²³⁴ Nelson 1986: p. 11 ff (The same verse is also found at the end of chapters 15 and 18 of the *GD*).

²³⁵ Nelson 1986: p. 309.

²³⁶ Nelson 1986: pp. 354-5,

²³⁷ Nelson 1986: p. 367.

and essentially unitive style of devotion supersedes them as Madhusūdana's highest goal. No doubt, it is one more appropriate to the emotional life of a sophisticated non-dualist renunciate.²³⁸ Nelson (2004) shows that the transition of *bhakti* from the psychological to its ontological aspect runs parallel both in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism (especially in the works of Rūpa Gosvāmī) and MS, but finds the effort of the former more convincing than that of the latter. Nelson also opines that MS was perhaps aware of Rūpa Gosvāmī's works, but his treatment of *bhakti* was influenced more by other predecessors like Śrīdhara.

2.4.4. *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

Coming to the *GD* of MS, the subject matter of our thesis, the following significant scholarly works are available to us. Gupta (1977) has made probably the first English translation of the *GD* of MS. The translator's preface to the work introduces the reader not only to the basic features of the *GD* but also to the textual formation and relevance of the *BhG* itself in the modern context. A short biographical note on MS is followed by this preface. Apart from the translation, this work contains the original Sanskrit text of the *BhG* together with its translation, though the translation of verses expressing devotional sentiment of MS found in beginning or end of many of the chapters of the *GD* is not found therein. An alphabetical index of the verses of the *BhG* is also added to the work. In judging this work, we can quote here Nelson (1989), 'Sisir Kumar Gupta's translation ...

²³⁸ Nelson 1989; p. 14.

while perhaps helpful for the general reader, is often seriously inaccurate, tending to make the text's presentation of devotion appear more liberal than it is.²³⁹

Gambhirananda (2000a) is another translation of the *GD* of MS into English that is more accurate and useful than that of Gupta. The Introduction of the work contains a short account of the biography and the works of MS, based on available scholarly works available to the translator, besides a brief estimate of MS's views expressed in the *GD*. The work also contains original Sanskrit texts of the *BhG* and their translations. Exhaustive footnotes are also given at important instances, along with a few variant readings of the *GD*. A detailed glossary of philosophical terms and concepts, and the index of verses of the *BhG* in alphabetical order have made it easy for the English speaking reader to study this valuable text of MS.

Dvivedī (1975) is a Hindi translation of the *GD*, including the text of both the *BhG* and *GD*. Explanations are added by the translator with a view to make the import of the *GD* more explicit. An index of the *BhG* verses in alphabetical order is also given. Sanātanadeva (2005) and Agrawal (2005) are other Hindi translations of the *GD*, both containing copious footnotes and the original texts of the *BhG* and *GD*. Both translations also provide detailed accounts of MS's life and much additional useful material. Sanātanadeva (2005) compares MS's distinctive approach to the *BhG* as compared to those of Śaṅkara and Dhanapati Sūri (a critic of MS, 19th century CE), while Agrawal (2005) carries alphabetical indices of the *BhG* verses, a glossary of important proper nouns and technical terms, an extensive bibliography and also identifies sources of the quotations cited in the *GD*.

²³⁹ Nelson 1989: Footnote 12, p. 86.

Brahma (1986) has edited Bhūtanātha Saptatīrtha's Bengali translation of the *GD*, with a brief introduction containing a bird's eye view of MS's treatment of the *BhG*. The work contains the original Sanskrit texts both of the *BhG* and *GD*, besides their Bengali renderings. The prose order exhibiting the syntactic relation (*anvaya*) between the constituent words of each the *BhG* verse is also given. As one of the basic features of the *GD* is that MS often deals with other views extensively to the extent they are in conformity with and helpful in reaching his own philosophical consideration on a firm basis, additional explanatory notes on important passages along with the translations have been provided that are helpful for understanding the text. A discussion on the true import and essence of the *BhG*, and an account of its merits (*Gītā-māhātmya*) are appended to the work.

Three articles by Nelson (1988, 1989a, 1998) are based on different chapters of his doctoral thesis (Nelson 1986). While both the *BhR* and *GD* have a devotional dimension, MS's peculiar philosophical stance of being simultaneously a non-dualist and a devotee can be understood by considering the teaching of the *BhR* is preliminary to the understanding of the purport of the *GD*. Nelson (1988) highlights that while Śaṅkara took renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) to be the main objective of the *BhG*, MS considered it to be the complete surrender to God (*bhagavad-eka-śaraṇatā*).²⁴⁰ MS's final Advaitic outlook is expressed more in the *GD* where, notwithstanding a prominent place given to *bhakti*, it is subordinated to the path of knowledge and accommodated within a traditional Vedāntic discipline through the *mahāvākya*-s, whereas in the *BhR*, *bhakti* presents itself as an independent path to the ultimate goal, independent of the Vedic path of knowledge. Nelson therefore

²⁴⁰ Nelson 1988: p. 78.

suggests that in the *BhR*, MS is addressing a general audience consisting of learned lay devotees of Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta, whereas the *GD* is mainly meant to advocate devotion to the renunciates of that tradition. Nelson's critical analysis of the devotion in both these texts will be examined again in this thesis when dealing with the handling of various philosophical concepts in the *GD*.

Sharma (1967) has made a critical and comparative study of the western ethical outlook of Butler and the Advaitic outlook towards action (*karma*) with special reference to the *GD* of MS. Sharma finds considerable accord between MS and Butler with respect to duty, virtue and the relation between ethics and religion. Sharma opines that in the *GD*, MS especially distinguishes himself from other *BhG* commentators by combining spiritual knowledge and works together with the help of *bhakti* or devotion to God. Having discussed Butler's moral philosophy in the first five chapters, Sharma devotes the next four chapters delineating MS's ethical considerations and their contrast with those of Butler; before drawing a general conclusion at the end of the work.

Siṃha (1994) presents a critical study of the *GD* in Hindi, comparing MS's approach to liberation and its various means of attainment as popularly understood (*karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti yoga*-s) with that of Śaṃkara. Referring to the comments on *BhG* 18.66 where, in sharp contrast to Śaṃkara's assertion that the *BhG* teaches *jñāna-niṣṭhā* as preceded by the renunciation of all actions, MS advocates *bhakti-niṣṭhā* as the conclusion of the *BhG*, viewing the other two means, i.e. *karma-niṣṭhā* and *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, as the means and fruit of *bhakti-niṣṭhā*. Siṃha concludes that this is a bold step on MS's part, making this one of his most noteworthy contributions to the Advaita Vedānta.

In the context of discussing the concept of liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*) in later scholastic Advaita, Fort (1998) points out the influence of the devotional and *yogic* works on the *GD*. From the copious references to the *JMV* and *YV*, and MS's own treatment of *jīvanmukti* and the means to its attainment in the *GD*, Fort comes to the conclusion that the *GD* is influenced by the Yogic Advaita, which is rather uncommon in most other Advaita works, including the *AdS*.²⁴¹

Marcaurelle (2000), in the course of an extensive study of renunciation in the tradition of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, has critically analysed several passages from the *GD* together with other post-Śaṅkara writers on the subject. With the help of copious textual references to the works of both Śaṅkara and MS, Marcaurelle assesses the role of physical renunciation and of renunciation of all actions (*sarvakarmasaṁnyāsa*) in attaining liberation. He concludes that although MS tried to provide a complete understanding of the path to liberation, he was inconsistent and misunderstood Śaṅkara in many places as well.²⁴²

In an essay that draws mainly from the *BhR* and *GD*, Gupta Gombrich (1991) has reflected on how MS reconciles his devotional attitude to Kṛṣṇa with his own Advaitic philosophy, and whether MS can accept the doctrines of both Rāmānuja and the *YV* in some manner. In this analysis, the author takes into consideration MS's overarching allegiance to the Advaita Vedānta in combination with his usage of the literary theory of aesthetic experience, which owes much to Abhinavagupta and the Kashmir Śaiva school and his reliance on the *BP*, which presupposes a very different current of thought derived from the southern

²⁴¹ Fort 1998: pp. 65 and 122-5.

²⁴² Marcaurelle 2000: p. 202.

Vaiṣṇavism, a movement inspired by the Tamil poet-saints, the Ālvārs, who cared more for a certain religious attitude and pure soteriology, rather than philosophy.

After a detailed examination of various points pertaining to MS, Rāmānuja and Abhinavagupta, Gupta Gombrich shows that MS was influenced by both these predecessors,²⁴³ in addition to Caitanya and the *YV* (e.g. *GD* 3.18 follows the *YV* scheme of levels of *yogic* development).²⁴⁴ Discussing MS's delineation of the eleven stages of spiritual development of a devotee in the *BhR*, Gupta Gombrich concludes that his attempt to reconcile *bhakti* with Advaita tenets remains unconvincing and problematic

One glance at these stages reveals Madhusūdana's basic problem of being a strictly rational philosopher of Advaita Vedāntic affiliation and at the same time swept off his feet by the passionate Kṛṣṇa-bhakti taught by Caitanya and his followers in Bengal. His attempt to reconcile these two contradictory streams remains unsuccessful. Still his scheme of a devotee's spiritual development remains unique. All his inspiration comes from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where various levels of experience are illustrated by citing examples from the myths about Kṛṣṇa contained in the text. Thus like Rāmānuja he too depends on the purāṇic authority to justify his personal views on *bhakti*. As a clear thinking philosopher, Madhusūdana was keenly aware of the contradictions in his theory of *bhakti* experience. He repeatedly admitted this ambivalence in charming verses scattered in his various works.²⁴⁵

Sitamahalakshmi (1972) however points out that there is a legitimate place of *bhakti* in the Advaita Vedānta. This is evident from the following words of this author:

An elaborate discussion on the concept of *bhakti*, beginning with Śrī Śaṅkara and culminating in Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's famous treatise *Bhaktirasāyana* and his commentary *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* on the *Bhagavadgītā*, proves that *bhakti* is not only possible but also necessary in Advaita. ...We may here state in passing that *bhakti* has its legitimate place on the practical side of Advaita. The conception of *Īśvara* who is a complex of *nirguṇa* Brahman and *avidyā* as the material and efficient cause of the phenomenal world has been there in Advaita allowing room for devotion to *Īśvara* by *jīva* who also is viewed as a complex of *nirguṇa* Brahman and *avidyā* and its product-mind. The world is illusory only from the stand-point of the ultimate reality.

²⁴³ Gupta Gombrich 1991: pp. 236-9.

²⁴⁴ Gupta Gombrich 1991: pp. 233-40.

²⁴⁵ Gupta Gombrich 1991: pp. 241-2.

Having given the basic philosophical stance of Advaita in a nutshell, the author now discusses how *bhakti* plays a role in attaining liberation. While pointing out various proximate means (*antraṅga-sādhana*) of the intuitive knowledge of *brahman*, as attested by the tradition, she provides textual support from Śaṅkara and other early authors that *bhakti* is indeed well attested as one of these means.²⁴⁶ The author goes on to discuss the nature, means, and classifications of devotion, mainly following the *BP* and *MS*'s *BhR*, and with sporadic references to the *GD*, concluding that relying on the *Gītā*, both Śaṅkara and *MS* accept *bhakti* as an important and helpful means to knowledge, which leads to self realisation.²⁴⁷

Mishra (2009) provides a survey of *bhakti* in Vedānta, from the *Rgvedic* times to the 16th-17th centuries. He describes *MS*, along with others such as Brahmānanda Sarasvatī (17th Century CE), Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha (17th century CE) and Kāśmīraka Sadānanda (17th century CE) as representatives of an era of neo-*bhakti* in the Advaita Vedānta, who admit the role of *bhakti* even in the state of *jīvanmukti* and also its (*bhakti*'s) independent status, like knowledge, as a path of liberation.²⁴⁸ With copious references to the *BhR* and *GD*, and to Brahmānanda Sarasvatī and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, both of whom wrote commentaries on *MS*'s works, Mishra concludes that *MS*'s notable contribution to the place of *bhakti* in the Śaṅkara Vedānta tradition lies in establishing the compatibility and interdependency of the paths of knowledge and devotion towards attaining liberation.²⁴⁹ Thus, the following observations of Mishra may be cited in this context.

According to the Bhāgavata, Premabhakti is essential for a Jñāna-yogin aspiring for the highest knowledge which it produces, and at the same time highest Jñāna is essential for a

²⁴⁶ Sitamahalakshmi 1972: pp. 6-10.

²⁴⁷ Sitamahalakshmi 1972: pp. 15-47.

²⁴⁸ Mishra 2009: p. 186.

²⁴⁹ Mishra 2009: pp. 187-221, 222-38.

Bhaktiyogin aspiring for the highest Premabhakti, which it achieves in this case. ... The views of Śrīdhara, Bopadeva, Hemādri, Madhusūdana and Nārāyaṇa are the same as those of the author of the Bhāgavata. It is in fact, these views of the last two of the five great stalwarts of Bhakti which, as repeatedly remarked, constitute the newest and the finest contribution to the concept of Bhakti in Śāṅkara Vedānta.²⁵⁰

Though Mishra (2009) may be viewed as one of the early attempts in modern times (first published in 1967) to give a thorough exposition of the development of *bhakti* in the tradition of Śaṅkara's Advaita, it has come to be adversely reviewed by modern scholars such as Nelson (1986) and Hirst (1993). Other than the studies discussed above, Chakravarti (2004: pp. 190-1), Dazey (1993: pp. 155-7, 167), Iyer (1966: p. 482), Minkowski (2011), Mishra (2006), Mitra (1930: p. 453), Nelson (2007a), Smarananda (1974: pp. 304-5) and Veezhinathan (2001) also deal with and refer to MS, his works, and his philosophical contributions to *bhakti* and Advaita.

2.5. Room for further research on the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

As already mentioned earlier, MS's commentary on the *BhG* has not been approved on all issues by later commentators, including Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri, Veṅkaṭanātha and Dhanapati Sūri, who are, like MS, adherents to the Advaita Vedānta. Besides, MS's efforts to place *bhakti* within the parameters of Advaita doctrine – a fact considered to be the unique contribution of MS to the tradition of Advaita – is not unanimously regarded as successful by modern scholarship. Two modern scholars, Lance Nelson and Sanjukta Gupta, who have studied MS's views in the *BhR* and *GD*, seem to hold divergent views, while Marcaurelle asserts that MS occasionally failed to understand the intent of Śaṅkara's commentary on the *BhG*.

²⁵⁰ Mishra 2009: p. 236.

Therefore, on the basis of modern research available on MS in general, we can state with confidence that while there have been some studies of the *GD* of MS, none of them is fully exhaustive in its treatment of the text, as proposed in this thesis. Though the *GD* is a widely available complete commentary on the *BhG*, this thesis, in its modest way, will be the first extensive and critical study of this text, in the process of which it will try to fill some gaps in the available research on MS. Moreover, this thesis places the *GD* in the context of the history of the commentarial tradition of the *BhG* and discusses the views of post-Madhusūdana commentators on his work.

Madhusūdana's Introduction (*upodghāta*) to the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* as Summary of the *Bhagavadgītā*

‘The Lord has divulged all this in the scripture *Gītā*.
So my mind is very much keen to explain it.’

-- *GD*, introductory verse 40²⁵¹

MS's introduction (*upodghāta*) gives not only an excellent summary of his own commentary on the text of the *BhG*, but also of the teaching of the *Gītā* itself. As one of the English translators of MS's commentary on the *BhG* rightly remarks, ‘His introduction gives the essence and the evolution of the *Gītā* with a brilliant perspicuity.’²⁵² It also propounds explicitly a resume of the means of liberation²⁵³ and the role of devotion in it. Therefore, it will be useful to examine the introduction in some detail as a means of comprehending what MS aims at throughout the rest of the lengthy text.

In the discourse of Indian philosophical texts, the introduction often contextualises what follows and foreshadows its purport.²⁵⁴ A classical description of *upodghāta* is as an introduction that sets out the suitable place (*sthāna*) or occasion for the study of a text, the reason (*nimitta*) for it, the speaker (*vaktā*), the listener (*śrotā*), the use it offers for the listener (*śrotr-prayojana*) and an explanation of the relationship (*sambandha*) of all these to the discourse proper.²⁵⁵

Prakāśātmayati, in his *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*, defines an *upodghāta* as an

²⁵¹ *etat sarvaṃ bhagavatā gītāśāstre prakāśitam / ato vyākhyātum etanme mana utsahate bhṛṣam //*

²⁵² Gupta 1977: Translator's preface, p. x (italics added).

²⁵³ Gambhirananda 2000a: p. 16.

²⁵⁴ *cintāṃ prakṛtasidhyarthāṃ upodghātaṃ pracakṣate* (Quoted in Panoli 2003: p. 6).

²⁵⁵ *sthānaṃ nimittaṃ vaktā ca śrotā śrotrprayojanam / sambandhādyabhidhāṇca upodghātaḥ sa ucyate //* (quoted in Vāsudevānanda 2006: p. 3).

introductory consideration of alternative meanings to better explicate the goal that is sought to be established.²⁵⁶ Such introductory passages often contain the four unifying factors necessary for beginning the study of a philosophical work, namely the person for whom the work is meant (*adhikārin*), the topic or subject-matter of the text (*viṣaya*), the relation of the subject-matter to the text (*sambandha*), and the purpose served by studying it (*prayojana*). These four unifying factors are technically known as *anubandha-catustaya*, as explained systematically in the *Vedāntasāra* (VS) of Sadānanda Yogīndra (16th century CE).²⁵⁷ The knowledge of these four factors produces the inclination (*pravṛtti*) of the person concerned to engage with the text.²⁵⁸

In Advaita, the typical person with eligibility for the knowledge of *brahman* (*adhikārin*) is one whose mind has been purified through prior performance of prescribed actions and the fourfold inner disciplines (*sādhana-catustaya*).²⁵⁹ The non-difference between the supreme reality and the individual self is the topic for discussion (*viṣaya*) in the text, the connection between this knowledge and the text that establishes it is the relation (*sambandha*) and the dispelling of nescience with the rise of non-dual knowledge, thereby attaining the highest bliss is the purpose of

²⁵⁶ *pratipādyam arthaṃ buddhau saṃgrhya prāg eva tadarthaṃ arthāntara-varṇanam upodghātaḥ* (*Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*, p. 46).

²⁵⁷ Nikhilananda 1997: VS 1.5, p. 3.

²⁵⁸ Also see Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 10. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (7th century CE), the founder of the Bhāṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsā, emphasises this too in the *Ślokavārtika* that a listener listens to a *sāstra* only when its purpose and its relation to its subject-matter are already known (*siddhārthaṃ jñātasambandhaṃ śrotuṃ śrotā pavartate / sāstrādaḥ tena vaktavyaṃ sambandhaḥ saprayojanaḥ ||*) [Shastri 1978: *Pratijñā-sūtra*, śloka 17, p. 6].

²⁵⁹ Nikhilananda 1997: VS 1.6, p. 3 (Also refer to *Brahmasūtra* 2000: BSB 1.1.1, pp. 71-5; Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 1, p. 1; Śrīśāṅkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 3, VC 17-8, p. 5 etc.).

its study (*prayojana*).²⁶⁰ A proper introduction provides the full orientation to the text, touching upon all these aspects.

MS's introduction to his commentary on the *BhG* consists of forty six verses, which form the focus of this chapter. This study will critically compare this with the introductions to the *BhG* commentaries of Śaṃkara, Ānandagiri (on Śaṃkara's commentary on the *BhG*), Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara on distinct issues, in order to explore how these earlier authors may have influenced theoretical considerations in MS's *BhG* commentary. Other works of MS and Śaṃkara, as also texts that are traditionally accepted as authoritative and may have shaped MS's thought, will also be taken into consideration.

3.1. Structure of the introduction to the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

The versified introduction to the *GD* can be divided into thematic units. Verses 1-3a provide an invocation, and set out the author's reason for undertaking a commentary on the *Gītā*. Verses 3b-7 describe both the Vedas and the *BhG* as being similarly tripartite in structure and serving the same purpose, concluding with the predominance of *bhakti-niṣṭhā*. The threefold division of the *BhG* as the means of establishing the unity of *jīva* and *brahman*, as stated by the Upanisadic dictum 'That thou art' (*tattvamasi*) is described in verses 8-10. The means of liberation (*mukti-sādhana-parvan*) with special reference to Pātañjala Yoga are covered in verses 11-27, while the next two verses described the one who is liberated while living (*jīvanmukta*). Verses 30-40 touch upon the importance of devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti*) for the liberated while living in attaining the final emancipation

²⁶⁰ Nikhilananda 1997: VS 1.27, pp. 15-6.

(*videha-mukti*). The last six verses eulogize the *Gītā* as the eminent means of eradicating hindrances to liberation (*mokṣa*), the supreme attainment of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*).

3.1.1. Verses 1-3a: The invocation, the purpose of *Bhagavadgītā* and

Madhusūdana's commentary

MS begins his commentary with a traditional verse offering salutations (*maṅgalācaraṇa*) to Lord Rāmacandra, who is worshipped by the highest order of mendicants (*parama-ḥaṁsa-s*) and who resides in the hearts of devotees.²⁶¹ Note that Śaṅkara also begins his commentary on the *BhG* with obeisances to Lord Nārāyaṇa, but by quoting a Purāṇic verse, rather than composing an invocation of his own. Ānandagiri, who starts his gloss on the *BhG* commentary with a salutation to Lord Vāsudeva (Hari) and Śaṅkara,²⁶² explains that Nārāyaṇa is Śaṅkara's chosen deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*), with a popularly cited cosmic significance as given in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. The primordial waters are created by the supreme person (*nara*) and are therefore called *nāra*. They also become his abode (*ayana*) at the time of dissolution, so that this supreme person is called Nārāyaṇa.²⁶³ Ānandagiri also provides a subtler conception, whereby the word *nara* refers to all bodies, moving and unmoving, so that '*nārā*' means the individual embodied selves, which are the reflections of the supreme consciousness, while Nārāyaṇa is the inner controller

²⁶¹ *om namaḥ paramahaṁsāsvādita caraṇakamala cinmakarandāya bhaktajanamānasanivāsāya śrīrāmacandrāya*// (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, *maṅgalācaraṇam*, p. 1).

²⁶² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Ānandagirivyākhyā*, introductory verses 2-3, p. 1.

²⁶³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā* and *Ānandagirivyākhyā*, p. 1-2 (Also see Aiyar 1988: p. 1, Vāsudevānanda 2006: p. 3, Gambhirananda 2010: Footnote 1, pp. 1-2 and Sastry 2004: p. 1).

(*antaryāmin*), the substratum of all embodied selves.²⁶⁴ Śaṃkara's introduction also describes Nārāyaṇa as Viṣṇu, the original creator (*ādikartā*), who incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva and Devakī, for the protection of the earthly *brahman* (the spiritual order of the world) and the spiritual life (*brāhmaṇatva*) and gave the *BhG* to teach the ultimate reality called Lord Vāsudeva, the supreme *brahman*.²⁶⁵

Rāmānuja's invocation to his *BhG* commentary salutes his great predecessor Yāmunācārya and lists numerous attributes of Lord Nārāyaṇa, who is also of the nature of infinite knowledge and bliss (*ananta-jñānānandaika-svarūpa*), and narrates his (Nārāyaṇa's) advent on earth as Lord Kṛṣṇa and his subsequent appearance in the battle field of Kurukṣetra.²⁶⁶ Śrīdhara Svāmin at the beginning of his commentary on the *BhG* pays homage to Lord Mādhava (Śrīkṛṣṇa), who is of the nature of supreme bliss (*paramānanda*), and Lord Viśeśvara (Śiva).²⁶⁷ We may note in this context that Śaṃkara's *BSB* too describes devotion to God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*) as well-established in the Vedas and the Smṛti texts.²⁶⁸ MS's homage to Lord Rāmacandra as the qualified (*saguṇa*) *brahman* in his invocatory verse is in consonance with both the theistic Vedānta of Rāmānuja and his own predecessors in the Advaita school.

MS then points out his purpose in undertaking a commentary on the *BhG* and justifies his naming it '*Gūḍhārthadīpikā*'. While staying faithful to his predecessor Śaṃkarabhagavatpāda in interpreting the text, MS proposes to deal with almost each and every word of the *BhG*. All this is conveyed in the 1st verse of

²⁶⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Ānandagīrivyākhyā*, p. 2 (Also see Gambhirananda 2010: Footnote 1, pp. 1-2 and Sastry 2004: p. 1).

²⁶⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopākramaṇikā*, pp. 4-7.

²⁶⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1992: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghātaḥ*, pp. 5-6.

²⁶⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīdharīvyākhyā*, introductory verses 1 and 2, pp. 1-2.

²⁶⁸ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 2.2.42, p. 573 (Also see Sitamahalakshmi 1972: p. 4).

the introduction; ‘After having discussed the meaning of the commentary of the revered one (*bhagavatpāda*) with great care, I will render, almost word for word, the illumination of the hidden meaning of the *Gītā* (i.e., the *Gītāgūḍhārthadīpikā*).’²⁶⁹ In the tradition of Vedānta philosophy, the relation between the master and his disciples in a monastic order is of utmost importance, and the disciples are often regarded as the successors of their masters. MS’s reference to *bhagavatpāda* in his introductory verses in the *GD* is clearly to Śaṅkara.²⁷⁰ While other commentators of the *BhG* may have overlooked the unintelligible portions in it, MS proposes to deal with them in detail. MS intends to explain even the words (terms) or *pada*-s that are known as particles (*nipāta*), including ‘but’ (*tu*), ‘and’ (*ca*), ‘or’ (*vā*) etc. in the *BhG*, that other commentators would have typically passed over without explanation. This is the implication of the expression ‘almost word for word’ in the verse. Thus, while keeping the non-dualistic doctrine of Śaṅkara centrestage in his interpretation, MS intends to make clear all the intricacies that his predecessors may have overlooked. Indeed, MS gives some indication that he wishes to explicate even the intricacies of Śaṅkara’s *BhGB* in minute detail. Some scholars think that, since the commentators in their work often do not reveal their sectarian doctrines that are kept secret (*sāṃpradāyika-rahasya*) to the readers, MS wants to bring those secrets to light in his commentary.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ *bhagavatpādabhāṣyārtham ālocyātiprayatnataḥ / prāyaḥ pratyakṣaram kurve gītāgūḍhārthadīpikām //*, *GD*, introductory verse 1 (‘*pratipadam*’, *Bhagavadgītā* 1912).

²⁷⁰ *śrutismṛtipurāṇānām ālayam karuṇālayam / namāmi bhagavatpādam śaṅkaram lokaśaṅkaram //* (Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvaliḥ 1999: *Sāṃpradāya paraṃparā ślokaṇi* 4). This is an oft-cited verse in the Advaita tradition that identifies Śaṅkara as *bhagavatpāda*.

²⁷¹ See Dvivedī 1975: Vol. 1, *upodghāta*, p. 3 and Sanātanaḍeva 2005: *Upodghāta*, footnotes 2 and 4, pp. 1-2.

Having paid obeisance to both the Lord and his predecessor in the tradition, MS lays down the philosophical foundation of his commentary. By terming the *BhG*, in verse 2, a scripture (*śāstra*), and identifying its purpose (*prayojana*) as the highest good (*param niḥśreyasam*), i.e. liberation or salvation (*mokṣa*), MS makes it clear that he regards the *BhG* on par with the Upaniṣads, which also aim to teach the means of obtaining the complete termination of transmigratory life and its cause. To quote MS; ‘It has been said that the purpose of the scripture of the *Gītā* is the highest good, which is of the nature of final cessation of transmigration (*saṃsāra*) together with its cause (nescience).’²⁷² In the same vein, Śaṃkara’s introduction to his *BhGB* had also referred to the text as a scripture whose purpose is to teach liberation, characterized by the complete termination of transmigration and its cause.²⁷³

In his commentary on verse seven of the *Mahimnastotra*, MS had held that the expression, ‘all scriptural sources of knowledge’ (*śāstra-prasthāna-s*) referred to the ‘three’ (*trayī*), which include the eighteen *vidyā-s*: four Vedas (the *Rk*, *Yajuh*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva*) six Vedāṅgas (the *Śikṣā*, *Kalpa*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta*, *Chandas*, and *Jyotiṣa*), four Upāṅgas (the *Purāṇas*, *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsā*, and *Dharmaśāstras*), and four Upavedas (the *Āyurveda*, *Dhanurveda*, *Gāndharvaveda*, and *Arthaśāstra*). MS adds that the Upapurāṇas are included in the *Purāṇas*, *Vaiśeṣika* in *Nyāya*, *Vedānta* in *Mīmāṃsā*, while *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Pātañjala* (*Yoga*), *Pāśupata*, and *Vaiṣṇava* texts are included in the category of *Dharmaśāstras*.²⁷⁴

²⁷² *sahetukasya saṃsārasyātyantoparamātmakam / param niḥśreyasam gītāśāstrasyoktam prayojanam //*, *GD*, introductory verse 2.

²⁷³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, pp. 6-7.

²⁷⁴ *Śivamahimnaḥstotraṃ* 1996: *Madhusūdanī*, pp. 21-2.

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* too cites all these eighteen *vidyā-s* (Cf. Sengupta 1389 Bengali Era: *Anuvāda*, footnote 3, p. 12).

Heterodox schools like the Cārvāka, Bauddha and Jaina have their separate scriptural sources of knowledge, but MS holds that these are non-Vedic and not even indirectly helpful in obtaining *puruṣārtha*-s, so that they are to be ignored.²⁷⁵ In the *GD* as well, by the word *śāstra*, MS means the Vedas, and the related texts like the Smṛtis, Purāṇas etc. that can be considered Vedic.²⁷⁶ For Śaṅkara too, the *BhG* represents the quintessence of the entire teaching of the Vedas.²⁷⁷

MS holds that the *BhG*, rendered in the form of a dialogue between the Lord and Arjuna, is meant to extol the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahma-vidyā*), as found in different Upaniṣadic dialogues like those between Janaka and Yājñavalkya (*BU*), Naciketā and Yamarāja (*KU*) etc.²⁷⁸ Considering the *BhG* to be on a par with the Upaniṣadic expositions, MS quotes the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Jābala Upaniṣad* etc. which bear references to Kurukṣetra.²⁷⁹ This idea is also supported in one of the customary verses of meditation (*dhyāna-śloka*) on the *BhG*, where all the Upaniṣads are called cows, the son of Nanda (Kṛṣṇa) is the milkman, the *BhG* is the supreme milk (*dugdha*) akin to nectar (*amṛta*) and Arjuna (Pārtha) is the calf, and the wise (*sudhī*) are the enjoyer (*bhoktā*).²⁸⁰ While the Upaniṣadic dialogues convey lofty philosophical doctrines, the *BhG* explains the essentials (*sāra*) of those philosophical principles in an abbreviated form. Furthermore, there are several

²⁷⁵ *Śivamahimnaḥstotraṃ* 1996: *Madhusūdanī*, p. 22.

²⁷⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 650 (Also see Hanneder 1999: p. 578).

²⁷⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 5.

²⁷⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 8.

²⁷⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 9.

Some scholars hold that, since the *BhG* is treated to be an explanatory part of the Upaniṣads, it could be a part of any of the Vedas. As the text of the *BhG* is not found in the Vedas, it seems to be an extinct part of the Vedas at the time of Vedavyāsa, who composed the *MBh* on the basis of the historical truth of the Vedas (See Brahma 1986: Footnote, pp. 10-11).

²⁸⁰ *sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanah / pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīrbhoktā dugdham gītāmṛtaṃ mahat* // (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmadbhagavadgītāmaṅgalācāraṇam* 4).

Upaniṣadic texts found quoted in the *BhG*, with minor variations.²⁸¹ Thus, the *BhG*, considered as an explanatory part of the Upaniṣads, is regarded as an authoritative scripture.

We may note that Vācaspati Miśra in his *Bhāmatī* quotes the *Ślokavārtika* (*śabda-pariccheda*, *śloka* 4) of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, according to which that which advises one to engage in obligatory duties and to abstain from the prohibited actions is known as scripture, be it eternal or non-eternal.²⁸² From this traditional consideration as well, the *BhG*, which prompts Arjuna to undertake his own duty (*svadharma*) and dissuades him from others' duty (*para-dharma*), is certainly a scripture. Kumārila also says in his *Ślokavārtika* that; 'It is true of all *śāstra*-s as well as of all courses of actions that none of them is adopted by any one as long as the purpose (served by it) is not mentioned.'²⁸³ By setting its purpose (viz. liberation or salvation that entails the total obliteration of *saṃsāra* and its cause) in view, *BhG* fulfils this criterion as well.²⁸⁴ Thus, for both MS and Śaṅkara, *BhG* is an eminent *śāstra* teaching liberation, a fact that finds support not only within their own works, but also broadly from the commentarial tradition that they represent.

For MS, the supreme reality, i.e. the unqualified *brahman*, is none other than the qualified *brahman* (Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa).²⁸⁵ The word Viṣṇu is used in the *MBh* in the sense of all-pervading *brahman*.²⁸⁶ The Vedas aim at attaining the supreme state of Lord Viṣṇu (*viṣṇoḥ paraṃ padam*). As part of describing the nature of

²⁸¹ For details, refer to Sastrigal 1990.

²⁸² *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī* on BS 1.1.4, p. 109.

²⁸³ Shastri 1978: *Pratijñā-sūtra*, *śloka* 12, p. 5.

²⁸⁴ See Sanātanadeva 2005: *Upodghāta*, p. 2 and Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnotes 5. (iv) and (v), p. 2.

²⁸⁵ He says that he does not know any of the realities higher than Lord Kṛṣṇa (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 750 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, 1st concluding verse of chapters 15 and 18, pp. 632 and 775).

²⁸⁶ 'bṛhattvāt viṣṇurucyate' *MBh* 5.70.3 [quoted in Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnote 6. (i), p. 2].

salvation or liberation, the second introductory verse of the *GD* shows the first step, i.e. getting rid of transmigration along with its cause (*avidyā/ajñāna*), while the third begins with delineating the final stage, which is attainment of the supreme state of the Lord (*paramānanda-prāpti*), thereby explaining the complete nature (*pūrṇa-svarūpa*) of salvation. Thus MS says, ‘That supreme state of Lord Viṣṇu is in the nature of existence, knowledge, and bliss; and is absolute.’²⁸⁷

In the third verse, the term ‘*sat*’ refers to that which is true, not sublated in all three periods of time (*trikālābādhitā*), i.e. eternal (*nitya*), ‘*cit*’ refers to knowledge that is self-manifest (*svayaṃ-prakāśa*), and ‘*ānanda*’ refers to unending bliss (*niratiśaya-premāspada*). The *Vākyasudhā*, a topical text (*prakaraṇa-grantha*) of the Advaita tradition, says that all physical entities partake of five characteristics, namely existence (*asti*), appearance (*bhāti*), value as ‘it is blissful’ (*priyam*), as also name (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*). The first three are the essential nature (*svarūpa*) of *brahman* and the last two are attributed to the physical world. While all physical entities exist, shine and become blissful or favorable (*anukūla*) on account of their being superimposed on *brahman* characterized as existence, consciousness and bliss (*saccidānanda-lakṣaṇa*), the last two characteristics in the group are only momentarily real in terms of the first three.²⁸⁸ Therefore, it follows that Lord Viṣṇu who, according to MS, is nothing but existence-consciousness-bliss (*saccidānanda*) by nature, is alone the subject-matter (*viśaya*) of the text of the *BhG*. Śaṃkara too says that Lord Vāsudeva, in the nature of supreme *brahman*, is set forth as the subject-matter of the *BhG*.²⁸⁹ With this, in agreement with Śaṃkara, the second

²⁸⁷ *saccidānandarūpaṃ tatpūrṇaṃ viṣṇoḥ param padam /*, *GD*, introductory verse 3a.

²⁸⁸ *asti bhāti priyaṃ rūpaṃ nāma cetyaṃśapañcakam / ādyaṃ trayaṃ brahmarūpaṃ jagadrūpaṃ tato dvayaṃ //* (Cidghanānanda 1995: *Vākyasudhā* 20 and the explanation of it by Ānandagiri, pp. 355-6).

²⁸⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 7.

factor of *anubandha-catuṣṭaya*, namely *viṣaya*, is established in MS's introduction to the *GD*.

Thus, according to MS, the attainment of the supreme state or abode of Lord Viṣṇu (*brahman*) having the essential nature of existence, knowledge and bliss and being the absolute, preceded by the complete cessation of transmigration with its cause, is the purpose (*prayojana*) of the *BhG*.²⁹⁰ Though Śaṃkara, as noted above, explicitly mentions the complete cessation of transmigration with its cause to be the purpose of the *BhG*, his explicit statement that attaining the state of Lord Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva is the subject-matter of the *BhG* also agrees with the view of MS in question.

3.1.2. Verses 3b-7a: Vedas and *Bhagavatgītā* are similar in structure and identical in purpose

Having defined the nature of *mokṣa*, which is the purpose (*prayojana*) of the *BhG*, MS states the relation (*sambandha*) between the *BhG* and liberation (*mokṣa*) in the second half of verse 3 by saying that the tripartite Vedas containing *karma*, *jñāna*, and *upāsanā kāṇḍa*-s are the means for obtaining that *mokṣa*. To quote MS; 'The tripartite Vedas have been commenced for the attainment of that (highest state)...'²⁹¹

As stated earlier, Śaṃkara views the *BhG* as the essence of the whole teaching of the Vedas. While the Mīmāṃsakas accept the Veda as not having any human authorship (*apauruṣeya*) and consider it beginningless (*anādi*), the Advaita Vedāntins, following Śaṃkara, treat the Veda as having its source in *brahman* and

²⁹⁰ See Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnote 6.(iv), pp. 2-3.

²⁹¹ *yatprāptaye samārabdhā vedāḥ kāṇḍatrayātmakāḥ* //, *GD*, introductory verse 3b.

in turn being the source of *brahman* knowledge (*śāstrayoni*).²⁹² After describing Lord Viṣṇu, whose essential nature is existence-consciousness-bliss, as the subject-matter of the *BhG*, MS defines the content of the text with greater philosophical precision. In his unique way of establishing similarity in structure between the Veda and *BhG*, MS draws functional equivalences between the three sections of the Vedas and three sections of the *BhG*, focusing on action (*karma*), meditation or worship (*upāsanā*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) respectively. Thus, he argues in verse 4; ‘Just as the tripartite Vedas have the parts that deal with action, meditation or worship, and knowledge, the *Gītā*, consisting of eighteen chapters, also has three sections.’²⁹³ How MS justifies and interprets this similarity in structure will be discussed in further detail below.

In the traditional Indian philosophical systems, we find mainly two distinct parts of the Vedic texts, dealing with two separate things, viz. i.e., action (*karma*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), ultimately giving rise to the systems of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta respectively.²⁹⁴ Śaṅkara too, in an introduction to his *BhG* commentary, talks about two principal laws of the Vedas (*vaidika-dharma*). According to him, the Lord, after creating this cosmos (*jagat*) and for the sake of ensuring its existence, promulgates two principal Vedic laws. One is the law of embracing action (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma*), which ensures the continued existence of the order of creation, leading to worldly accomplishment (*abhyudaya*). The other is the

²⁹² See Sanātanadeva 2005: *Upodghāta*, footnote 3, p. 2 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: BSB 1.1.3, pp. 99-100.

²⁹³ *karmopāstis tathā jñānam iti kāṇḍatrayaṃ kramāt / tadrūpāṣṭādaśādhyāyairgītā kāṇḍatrayaṭmikā* // (‘*tadrūpāṣṭādaśādhyāyī gītā*’, *Bhagavadgītā* 1912), *GD*, introductory verse 4.

²⁹⁴ The Mīmāṃsā deals with the earlier portion of the Vedas, i.e., the Mantra and the Brāhmaṇa, called the part dealing with action, rituals and the sacrifices (*karma-kāṇḍa*), they are regarded as the Pūrvamīmāṃsā or the Karmamīmāṃsā; whereas the Vedānta is regarded as the Uttaramīmāṃsā or the Jñānamīmāṃsā due to their acceptance of the later portion of the Vedas, i.e., the Upaniṣads, being called the part dealing with the knowledge of reality (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*) [See also chapter 1.3 supra].

law of cessation of works (*nivṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma*), which ensures preservation of the Vedic truth (knowledge), leading to salvation (*niḥśreyasa*).²⁹⁵ This would indicate that Śaṅkara mainly accepts a two-fold division of the Veda, and perhaps a similarly two-fold division in the *BhG*, since according to him; the *BhG* is the essence of the entire Vedic teaching.²⁹⁶ Śaṅkara's commentary on the *BhG* does not actually support a textual division of the *BhG* into two sections, but the theme of *pravṛtti* versus *nivṛtti* occurs repeatedly throughout the text. Also note that there has always been a current of Vedāntic thought advocating a theory that knowledge-cum-action (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya*) is the means to liberation.

However, there are many places in Śaṅkara's writing where meditation or worship (*upāsanā*) is mentioned. In his commentary on the *BS*, a traditional opponent's view is that though the *jñāna* portion of the Veda teaching the identity of the individual self with *brahman*, is different from the *karma* portion presenting rites and sacrifices, the Upaniṣads are actually meant for enjoining actions like worship and meditation.²⁹⁷ In this manner, the third subject, namely *upāsanā*, can indeed be considered an important topic taught in the Veda. The *BhG*, being a text of Vedānta, also discusses all these three topics. The *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* of the Vedas lead to the Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta schools correspondingly, but the Vedānta, which also speaks of the *saguṇa* traits of *brahman*, also expounds various forms of *upāsanā* or *bhakti*, thereby resulting in the three parts of the Vedas dealing with *karma*, *upāsanā/bhakti*, and *jñāna* respectively. Here lies the justification of

²⁹⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, pp. 2-3.

But for him, the latter has the supremacy to the former being opposed to the Pūrvamīmāṃsaka view (See Hirst 1993: pp. 124-5).

²⁹⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 5.

²⁹⁷ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 1.1.4, p. 100.

MS for dividing the *BhG* into three parts corresponding to the three divisions of the Vedas.²⁹⁸

For MS, the Vedic teaching and, consequently, the teaching of the *BhG* (through their corresponding three sections) delineate three ways of achieving what is to be accomplished, viz. steadfastness in action (*karma-niṣṭhā*), steadfastness in loving devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā*), and steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*). MS also gives philosophical justification for this chronological order. MS holds that action and knowledge, being opposed to each other, cannot be co-related, i.e. they cannot be present simultaneously in the same self. Devotion, not being a contradiction of either action or knowledge, is placed in the middle and mediates between them.²⁹⁹ Action presumes an agent (*kartr*) and is occasioned by the quality of activities (*rajo-guṇa*). Knowledge of *brahman* is dependent on its object (*viśaya*) and is occasioned by the quality of truth (*sattva-guṇa*). As both these qualities cannot be present in one's mind at the same time, steadfastness in action and steadfastness in knowledge are mutually opposed and cannot be simultaneously present in the same mind. This calls for mediation, so the Lord does not mention them successively in the *BhG*, but places devotion in the middle.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ It has been a tradition, particularly among the Vedāntins, to divide the *BhG* into three parts taking six chapters each and considering their respective subject-matters. Though Śaṅkara has not made such explicit division in his commentary, later commentators such as Yāmuna, Rāmānuja etc. have mentioned this division clearly according to their philosophical considerations (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Gītārthasaṃgrahopodghātaḥ* 2-4, pp. 21-2 and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 2, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 4; vol. 3, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 5). Besides, Keśava Kāśmīrī Bhaṭṭa also describes the *Gītā* in his commentary on it, called the *Tattvaparakāśikā*, as having three *kāṇḍa*-s of *jñāna*, *karma* and *upāsana*, and as the essence of the entire Vedic lore (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001: Vol. 1, *Tattvaparakāśikā*, p. 2).

²⁹⁹ *yataḥ samuccayo nāsti tayor ativirodhataḥ / bhagavadbhaktiniṣṭhā tu madhyame parikīrtitā //*, *GD*, introductory verse 6.

There is a traditional maxim in this context, known as the *dehālī-dīpa-nyāya*: a lamp placed on the threshold of a house is lit from a lamp hanging outside the threshold, but illumines both inside and outside the threshold, thus serving two purposes at one time (See Apte 1998: p. 574).

³⁰⁰ See Sanātanadeva 2005: *Upodghāta*, footnote 1, p. 3, and Dvivedī 1975: Vol. 1, *upodghāta*, p. 5.

The views of other philosophical streams contrast with that of MS in this regard. According to the followers of the doctrine that knowledge-*cum*-action leads to liberation (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vāda*), the cause of liberation is not just knowledge conveyed through the texts, but knowledge gained through meditative practice and insight (*upāsanātmaka-jñāna*). To this way of thinking, there is no contradiction between knowledge and action. On the other hand, Rāmānujācārya does not accept this theory of combining action and knowledge. Rather, he holds that though knowledge and action do not contradict each other, they are not of equal importance in giving rise to liberation. Only knowledge, which comes from devotion to the Lord, leads to liberation, while action helps merely as preparatory to attaining the knowledge of *brahman*, by purifying the mind.³⁰¹ By contrast, and in agreement with Śaṅkara, MS sees *karma* and *jñāna* as opposed to each other, but he also gives great importance to devotion as mediating between the two.

3.1.3. Verse 7b: The predominance of steadfastness in devotion (*bhakti-niṣṭhā*)

MS maintains that devotion to God is intimately connected with both action and knowledge, and is effective in removing obstacles to bringing them together: ‘Since (steadfastness in devotion) is inherent in both (steadfastness in action and steadfastness in knowledge), it removes all obstacles. It is of three types: mixed with rites and duties (*karma-miśrā*), pure (*śuddhā*), and mixed with knowledge (*jñāna-miśrā*).’³⁰²

³⁰¹ The view is also echoed in the introduction to the *BhG* commentary of Śaṅkara (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 7).

³⁰² *ubhayānugatā sā hi sarvaviḥnāpanodinī / karmamiśrā ca śuddhā ca jñānamiśrā ca sā tridhā //*, *GD*, introductory verse 7.

There are many natural obstacles to accomplishing action. In order to remove the obstacles to the primary scriptural (*śrauta*) and the secondary scriptural (*smārta*) actions, rituals like chanting hymns, recitation of the name (*japa*) and worshipping (*pūjā*) of Lord Gaṇeśa etc. are performed. It is an established view that such obstacles are removed by devotion to God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*).³⁰³ Likewise, as Advaita views steadfastness in knowledge to be synonymous with desisting from all action, there are numerous obstacles to accomplishing that as well. MS already indicates in his introduction that steadfastness in devotion helps remove those obstacles as well. Unlike MS, Śaṅkara does not explicitly mention *bhakti* at his introduction to the *BhGB*, though he refers to *pravṛtti* (i.e. *karma* and *bhakti*) and *nivṛtti* (i.e. *jñāna*), and considers the former to be of help in purifying the mind when performed with a sense of dedication to God, thereby leading to the latter.³⁰⁴ MS may have been influenced by the theistic Vaiṣṇava thinking while making this threefold division of *bhakti*.³⁰⁵ However, note that while MS says the *BhG* has three sections devoted to *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*, he also speaks of three types of *bhakti*, viz. *karma-miśrā*, *śuddhā*, and *jñāna-miśrā*. The word *anugata* in verse 7 also means that *bhakti* is also at work in the two other paths, i.e. those of *karma* and *jñāna* as formulated in the *BhG*.³⁰⁶ It would seem that in his opinion, *bhakti* has been expounded throughout the entire *BhG*.

³⁰³ See Dvivedī 1975: Vol. 1, *upodghāta*, p. 5.

³⁰⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 7.

³⁰⁵ Viśvanātha Cakravartin, too, following the tradition of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, has classified *bhakti* into two types: *kevalā-bhakti* (pure devotion) and *pradhānī-bhūtā-bhakti* (a process outweighed by *bhakti*) in the introduction to his commentary on the *BhG*. While he holds that the former is independent, staunch, and bereft of the mixture of *karma* and *jñāna*; the latter is mixed with *karma* and *jñāna* (*Bhagavadgītā*: date not known, p. 2).

³⁰⁶ See Das 2008.

3.1.4. Verses 8-10: The threefold division of *Bhagavadgītā* as corresponding to

‘tat tvam asi’

Having pointed out the similarity between the Vedas and *BhG*, MS now shows that there is a fundamental identity between the teaching of the *BhG* and the Upaniṣads and that the *BhG* expounds, in its own way, the key of the Upaniṣadic dictum, *tattvamasi* (*CU* 6.8.7). In order to justify the three-fold structure of the *BhG*, MS devotes verses 8-10 to describe the terms *tat*, *tvam* and *asi*, the constituent words of this sentence. The individual self (*jīva*) is denoted by the term ‘thou’ (*tvam*) and is ‘established’ through performance of rites and duties as well as their renunciation (*karma-tyāga*), the supreme self (*paramātmā*) is denoted by the term ‘that’ (*tat*) and ‘determined’ through devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti*), while the identity of ‘thou’ and ‘that’, denoted by the term ‘are’ (*asi*), is grasped through steadfastness of knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*). Hence in verse 10, MS says, ‘In the third section, the meaning of the Upaniṣadic dictum (‘That thou art’) as a unity of the referents of those two terms (i.e. ‘that’ and ‘thou’) has again been explained explicitly. Thus, here (in the *BhG*) as well, all the sections are mutually related.’³⁰⁷

‘Great sentences’ (*mahāvākya*-s) indicate the Upaniṣadic statements which refer to the non-difference between the individual self (*jīva*) and the supreme self (*brahman*). ‘Consciousness is *brahman*’ (*‘prajñānaṃ brahma’* – *Ṛg Veda*, *AU* 3.3), ‘That thou art’ (*‘tattvamasi’* – *Sāma Veda*, *CU* 6.8.7), ‘I am *brahman*’ (*‘aham brahmāsmi’* – *Yajur Veda*, *BU* 1.4.10), and ‘*Brahman* is this self’ (*‘ayam ātmā brahma’* – *Atharva Veda*, *MāU* 2) are regarded as the principal great sentences in

³⁰⁷ *tr̥tīye tu tayoraikyam vākyaārtho varṇyate sphuṭam / evam apyatra kāṇḍānām sambandho’si parasparam //*, *GD*, introductory verse 10.

the four Vedas respectively.³⁰⁸ Whereas in the *CU* the sequence is ‘*tat*’ (that) followed by ‘*tvam*’ (thou), the other three sentences have those two terms in the opposite order.³⁰⁹ On the other hand, statements referring only to the nature (*svarūpa*) of God or only to the individual self are called subsidiary sentences (*avāntara-vākya-s*). In the *AdS*, MS says that realization of the ‘pure consciousness’ (*svarūpa-caitanya*) in the ‘great purport’ (*mahā-tātparya*) is reached with the help of the subsidiary purport (*avāntara-tātparya*), as in ‘One without second’ (‘*ekam evādvitīyam*’) etc.³¹⁰

The primary meaning (*mukhyārtha*) of the statement ‘That thou art’ can be shown in the following way. ‘That’ (*tat*) is the supreme self (*brahman*), viewed as the source of the universe, while ‘thou’ (*tvam*) is the individual self (*jīva*), the *ātman* conditioned by the body-mind complex. The secondary sense (*gauṇārtha*) of the sentence is that ‘that’ means pure consciousness, which is by nature existence, consciousness and bliss; and ‘thou’ denotes pure consciousness, which is the witness (*sākṣī*) of the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.³¹¹ As the term *tat* refers to remote consciousness (*parokṣa-caitanya*) and the term *tvam* refers to immediate or direct consciousness (*aparokṣa-caitanya*), they lack the fitness (*yogyatā*) to express the identity (*abheda*) of their respective referents. So, for the Advaitins, the identity between the referents of these two terms can be conveyed through what is called ‘exclusive-cum-non-exclusive implication’

³⁰⁸ See Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, p. 102.

Works like *Svārājyasiddhi* by Gaṅgādharendra Sarasvatī (1792 CE) are written solely for explaining the Upaniṣadic great sentences (See Maṅgalahari Muni 1934 and Acharya 2004: p. 395).

³⁰⁹ This is also the order in which the *BhG* conveys this identity, as per MS (See Sanātanadeva 2005: *Upodghāta*, footnote 2, p. 3).

³¹⁰ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: *Advaitasiddhi* 1.32, p. 510 (Also see Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 21).

³¹¹ See Mishra 2006: p. 67.

(*jahadajahallakṣaṇā* or *bhāga-lakṣaṇā*). In this kind of implication, the direct meaning of a word constituting the sentence is partially omitted, but partially retained. Thus, both the terms in this sentence imply consciousness as such, but the immediacy and the remoteness associated with consciousness, which are denoted by them respectively, are left out. Thus, having accepted the common and compatible meanings and omitted the different and incompatible ones, the statement refers to non-difference between what is signified by these two terms (viz. *tat* and *tvam*).³¹²

There is some dispute among the Advaita Vedāntins about the type of *lakṣaṇā* that has to be admitted while interpreting the sentence ‘*tattvamasi*’. Some modern scholars are of the opinion that Śaṅkara does not speak of any specific kind of *lakṣaṇā* in this case. Some post-Śaṅkara Advaita Vedāntins like Sarvajñātmamuni admit *jahallakṣaṇā*, where the primary meaning of a term is totally discarded and a secondary meaning is adopted, in order to make sense of the identity expressed in the sentence. Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra (16th century CE) maintains that one does not require any type of *lakṣaṇā* for getting the desired meaning of the sentence ‘*tattvamasi*’.³¹³ Nevertheless, while the Upaniṣadic great sayings directly advocate the unitary knowledge of *jīva* and *brahman*, the purpose of the *BhG* is seen as a restatement and interpretation of the Upaniṣads. MS’s view of the text has been partly anticipated by Ānandagiri, a commentator on Śaṅkara’s

³¹² See Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, pp. 102-3.

³¹³ See Rambachan 1991: pp. 76-8 (For a detailed view of Śaṅkara on this Upaniṣadic dictum, see *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvaliḥ* 1999: Vol. 9, *CUB* 6.8.7, pp. 384-5; *CUB* 6.16.3, pp. 407-12 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 4.1.3, p. 938). Also refer to *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 41 ff., Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, p. 87 for a detailed account of it.

BhGB, who holds that the text can be classified into three parts, *jīvakāṇḍa*, *brahmakāṇḍa*, and *aikyakāṇḍa*, each of them containing six chapters.³¹⁴

Thus, MS's assertion that the structure of the *BhG* aims to establish the unity of the meanings of *tat* and *tvam*, thereby itself becoming an explanation of the meaning of the Upaniṣadic *mahāvākya*, is quite commensurate with the general trend of Advaita Vedānta. However, this attempt has been questioned by later commentators, including Puruṣottamajī (1668 -1764 CE), a proponent of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta school, who criticises MS on this count. This critic asserts that there is no real textual support for attempting to divide the *BhG* into *karma*, *upāsanā*, and *jñāna kāṇḍa*-s and for then, drawing an equivalence between this structure and the Advaitic explanation of the Upaniṣadic great sentence (e.g. '*tattvamasi*').³¹⁵

3.1.5. Verses 11-27: Pātañjala Yoga and the means to liberation (*mukti-sādhana-parva*)

Each chapter of the *BhG* describes various aspects of the means to liberation (*mukti/mokṣa*), which is considered the highest good in Vedānta. As the Advaitic tradition generally considers *yogic* practices to be of practical help in the process, MS's introduction gives a detailed account of the *yogic* steps involved: 'The subject-matter of each chapter will be discussed in the respective chapters themselves. However, as the purpose of the *BhG* is liberation, the steps in the means

³¹⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Ānandagiri vyākhyā*, 1st concluding verse, p. 775 (Also see Sastrigal 1990: p. 2).

³¹⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Puruṣottamajīkṛtā'mṛtataraṅgiṇyupodghāṭaḥ*, p. 18.

of liberation are now described.³¹⁶ In this manner, MS addresses the relation (*sambandha*), the third factor of *anubandha-catuṣṭaya*, demonstrating how liberation, the goal of the *BhG*, is addressed in the text, by describing the means to the goal.

Śaṅkara also holds the purpose of the *BhG* to be the attainment of liberation, which is the final cessation of transmigration along with ignorance, its cause; but he doesn't provide much detail of the steps leading to liberation, quickly declaring knowledge of the self (*ātma-jñāna*), preceded by renunciation of all actions (*sarvakarma-saṁnyāsa*) to be its means.³¹⁷ MS takes up the first requisite, i.e. an eligible person or a qualified aspirant after liberation (*adhikārin*), in order to show the steps that an aspirant needs to undergo for attaining emancipation. Thus, the first step, he holds, is 'to undertake disinterested action after discarding both the desire-prompted action and forbidden action. Furthermore, the utmost merit reposes in reciting the name of and praising Lord Hari, and so on.'³¹⁸

The performance of disinterested actions, i.e. actions performed after renouncing its fruits (*niṣkāma-karma*), is combined with the forsaking of both those Vedic rituals that are performed solely out of desire for some personal gain (*kāmya-karma*)³¹⁹ and those that are forbidden in the Vedas (*niṣiddha-karma*).³²⁰ Subsequently, disinterested action includes actions like *japa* (recitation), *stuti*

³¹⁶ *pratyaadhyāyaṃ viśeṣastu tatra tatraiva vakṣyate / muktisādhana parvedaṃ śāstrārthena kathyate* //, *GD*, introductory verse 11.

³¹⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 6.

³¹⁸ *niṣkāma-karmānuṣṭhānaṃ tyāgāt kāmya-niṣiddhayaḥ / tatrāpi paramo dharmo japastutyādikaṃ hareḥ* //, *GD*, introductory verse 12.

³¹⁹ These are: performance of the *jyotiṣṭoma* sacrifice in order to attain the heaven (*jyotiṣṭomena svargakāmo yajeta*), performance of the *putreṣṭi* sacrifice in order to have a son (*putrakāmaḥ putreṣṭyā yajeta*), performance of the *kārīrī* sacrifice to have rainfall (*vṛṣṭikāmaḥ kārīryā yajeta*) etc. (See Nikhilananda 1997: *VS* 1.7, p. 4 and Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, p. 43).

³²⁰ Like killing a Brahmin (*brahma-hatyā*), taking liquor (*surā-pāna*), etc. which cause suffering leading to the hell as well (See Nikhilananda 1997: *VS* 1.8, p. 5).

(praising) etc. of the Lord.³²¹ Thus, by describing recitation of the name of and the praising of the Lord as activities that yield the highest merit, MS demonstrates the superiority of meditation/worship to other means of liberation. This is in consonance with his equation of the qualified *brahman* (which, according to him, is no other than Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme reality) with the Advaitic unqualified *brahman*.

Śaṅkara's introduction to his commentary on the *BhG* also says that the performance of actions prescribed by the Vedas, when performed in accordance with one's caste and life-stage, leads to the attainment of heaven, but if done with a sense of dedication to God and without desire for its fruits, results in purification of the mind. This, in turn, is conducive to the highest good by leading to the knowledge of reality. Thus, actions prescribed by the Vedas are of indirect help in attaining emancipation.³²² In his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (VC) too, Śaṅkara reiterates the view that disinterested actions only purify one's mind and that they do not have any direct role in the realisation of reality. It is through the discriminative analysis or enquiry (*vicāra*) that the reality is known.³²³ Since devotion to God is an affirmative engagement of the senses, body and mind, it can very well be put within the realm of actions recommended by the Vedas (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma*) as admitted by Śaṅkara. However, being a purificatory cause, devotion distinguishes itself from actions as such, and even from actions performed with renunciation of their fruits.³²⁴

The mind, being rid of defilements on account of the performance of disinterested action etc., becomes fit for undergoing the fourfold mental disciplines

³²¹ See Das 2008.

³²² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 7.

³²³ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 3, VC 11, p. 5.

³²⁴ See Das 2008.

aimed at achieving the knowledge of *brahman* and for the enquiry into *brahman* (*brahma-jijñāsā*). These fourfold mental disciplines consist of discernment between things eternal and transient (*nityānitya-vastu-viveka*), renunciation of desire for fruits of actions here and hereafter (*ihāmutra-phala-bhoga-virāga*), six-fold inner virtues of calmness, temperance etc. (*śamadamādi-sādhana-saṃpat*), and intense desire for liberation (*mumukṣutva*). Accordingly, MS says, ‘When the mind, being free of impurities, has the capacity for discrimination, then arises the firm discrimination between the eternal and the transient.’³²⁵

In his commentary on the first aphorism of the *BS*, Śaṃkara says that virtuous deeds (*dharma-jñāna*) resulting in prosperity (*abhyudaya-phala*) depend on the performance of Vedic enjoined actions, whereas knowledge of *brahman* (*brahma-vijñāna*) alone, bereft of any accessory action, results in liberation (*niḥśreyasa-phala*). While virtuous deeds are to be accomplished through human effort, the realization of *brahman* does not result from any human endeavour as *brahman* is an eternal and pre-existing entity. Vedic statements imparting the knowledge of virtuous deeds impel people to perform prescribed deeds, while statements communicating *brahman* are the primary valid means of knowing *brahman*, without enjoining action. The prerequisites to be met by the aspirant before undertaking reflection on *brahman*, i.e. *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*, are established by Śaṃkara in this context.³²⁶ MS in the *VK* refers to *BS* 1.1.1 and also indicates that

³²⁵ *kṣīṇapāpasya cittasya viveke योग्या यदा / nityānityavivekaḥ tu jāyate sudṛḍhaḥ tadā //*, *GD*, introductory verse 13.

³²⁶ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 1.1.1, pp. 69-75 (and Gambhirananda 2000: pp. 8-9). Also refer to Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 3, VC 17-20, pp. 5-6 and *UŚ*, *gadyaprabandhaḥ*, 1.2, p. 115 and *padyaprabandhaḥ*, 17.53, 17.87, pp. 206, 211; Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 2, p. 1 for the reference to *sādhana-catuṣṭaya* cited by Śaṃkara.

the word ‘then’ (*atha*) in this aphorism refers to the seeker possessed with the fourfold qualifications.³²⁷

Discernment, or *nityānitya-vastu-viveka*, is the first step in the fourfold disciplines, i.e. *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*. Śaṅkara holds that this discernment lies in the firm conviction that *brahman* alone is permanent (*nitya*), and all else other than it is transient (*anitya*). This is what is meant by *nityānitya-vastu-viveka*.³²⁸ Thereafter, the aspirant acquires the ability to acquire the other three prerequisites included under *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*. However, some scholars think that, although *nityānitya-vastu-viveka* is a pre-requisite of the enquiry into *brahman*, it cannot be considered as something that has been accomplished. It is rather to be treated as a capacity for rational investigation into the permanent and the impermanent that helps in knowing the ultimate reality, i.e. *brahman*.³²⁹

Now, although the aspirant may know *brahman* to be the only reality, he may as yet be unable to identify it as his own essential nature, because of being attached to objects of enjoyment, both visible (*dr̥ṣṭa*) ones like kingdom, progeny and sensory pleasure, and invisible (*adr̥ṣṭa*) ones like heaven and immortality. He must therefore disengage from these and cultivate a spirit of indifference (*ihāmutra-phala-bhoga-virāga*) to them, forsaking totally what seems to be other than *brahman*. Thus, MS says; ‘Indifference towards things of this world and after is called control; after that, in sequence, renunciation should be established through the accomplishment of calmness (and the five other virtues).’³³⁰

³²⁷ See Karmarkar 1962: pp. 12-3.

³²⁸ Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 3, p. 1.

³²⁹ See Rambachan 1991: p. 88, Malkovsky: 2001, p. 79.

³³⁰ *ihāmutrārthavairāgyaṃ vaśīkārabhidhaṃ kramāt / tataḥ śamādisaṃpattiyā saṃnyāso niṣṭhito bhavet //*, GD, introductory verse 14.

By affirming the utility of renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) in this context, MS agrees with Śaṁkara, who quotes several passages from the *Anugītā* (in *MBh* 14) and *BhG* 18.66 and considers renunciation to be the primary requisite for attaining liberation.³³¹ However, it is noteworthy that MS equates the state of the mind forsaking the objects of this world and beyond with *vaśīkāra-vairāgya* cited in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (*YS*),³³² where the craving of the enjoyment of objects is completely done away with. As will be seen, MS's extensive references to Pātañjala Yoga throughout the *GD* not only indicate an important feature of his commentary on the *BhG*, but also have bearing on how he thinks about *bhakti*.³³³ This dispassion and attendant renunciation is not a departure from the world, out of disgust and aversion, but a conviction towards understanding the nature of what ultimately leaves the aspirant dissatisfied.³³⁴ MS also says that when one acquires the third factor of *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*, i.e. the six-fold inner virtues or treasures (*śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti*) [calmness (*śama*), self-control (*dama*), restraining of the external senses (*uparati*), fortitude (*titikṣā*), concentration with the mind thus restrained (*samādhāna*) and faith (*śraddhā*)],³³⁵ one becomes established in renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*). Thus, with emphasis on *saṁnyāsa*, MS here agrees with Śaṁkara to whom, as we will see, the central teaching of the *BhG* is *saṁnyāsa*. Besides, in the

³³¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṁkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, pp. 6-7 (Also see Das 2008).

³³² Mukerji 2000: *YS* 1.15 and 1.40, pp. 37, 87.

Vairāgya is of two kinds - *para* and *apara*. *Apara* again, according to Vācaspati Miśra's *Tattvavaiśārādī* is of four types – *yatamāna*, *vyatireka*, *ekendriya* and *vaśīkāra* (For details of Vācaspati's explanation, see *Yogasūtra* 1963: *Tattvavaiśārādī* on *YS* 1.15, pp. 17-8) [Also see Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnote 8, pp. 4-5 and Brahma 1986: Footnote, p. 3].

³³³ See Das 2008.

³³⁴ See Rambachan 2006: p. 22.

³³⁵ For Śaṁkara's understanding of all these six factors, though they are almost in conformity with what we have meant here, refer to Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 5-6, pp. 1-2 and *Śrīśāṁkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 3, VC 23-27, pp. 6-7.

Besides, some scholars think that these six-fold treasures may be found correspondingly to *BhG* 6.3, 2.58, 18.66, 2.14, 2.53, and 4.39 (See Amṛtatvānanda 1998: p. 19).

BSB, Śaṃkara describes these six-fold inner virtues as the proximate means (*antaraṅga-sādhana*) for attaining knowledge of *brahman*, and therefore to be cultivated by the aspirant.³³⁶

According to MS, as a result of mastering the first three qualifications, renunciation of all worldly objects (*saṃnyāsa*) is established and an intense desire for liberation (*mumukṣutva*), the last step in *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*, arises, thereby completing the *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*. The last discipline, the intense desire for liberation, is of utmost importance, as this step alone leads an aspirant to the enquiry into *brahman*.³³⁷ The aspirant who is endowed with this fourfold means of liberation acquires then the fitness to approach a competent teacher to be instructed about the Upaniṣadic truth, i.e. the absolute knowledge. To quote MS; ‘Thus, from total renunciation arises a strong longing for liberation. Then follow approaching a teacher and receiving (scriptural) instructions from him.’³³⁸

The qualified seeker now follows another set of triple proximate process to liberation, consisting of hearing (*śravaṇa*), reflection (*manana*), and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*),³³⁹ under the guidance of a learned teacher. This is referred to by MS in the next two verses, i.e. 16 and 17. In verse 16, MS says, ‘Then in order to dispel doubt, listening to Vedāntic teaching etc. (reflection on it and contemplation

³³⁶ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 3.4.27, pp. 899-900.

³³⁷ Control of the senses etc. and acquiring of six qualities cause intense desire for liberation, indifference to the fruits of actions here and hereafter causes control of the senses etc. and acquiring of six qualities, and discrimination between permanent and impermanent entities causes indifference to the fruits of actions here and hereafter.

³³⁸ *evaṃ sarvaparitāgān mumukṣā jāyate dṛḍhā / tato gurūpasadanam upadeśagrahastataḥ //*, *GD*, introductory verse 15.

³³⁹ The triple process is described in the *BU* in the course of a dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī; ‘You see, Maitreyī-- it is one’s self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate’ (*BU* 2.4.5, 4.5.6).

thereafter) are followed. In this context, the entire lore of Uttaramīmāṃsā (Vedānta) scripture is employed.’³⁴⁰

Listening to Vedānta scriptures (*śravaṇa*) is not just hearing about the truth from the teacher or the scriptures. *Śravaṇa* is the investigation into the meaning of the Upaniṣadic texts.³⁴¹ Thus, listening to the Vedāntic scriptures from the teacher is an investigation of its purport (*tātparyā*) in order to know the non-dual reality, *brahman/ātman*. *Śravaṇa* includes the whole method of Vedāntic teaching and all the traditional methods like *adhyāropa-apavāda* (the theory of prior superimposition and subsequent denial),³⁴² *neti, neti* (not this, not this)³⁴³ etc. under the guidance of a competent teacher.

Hearing about *brahman* is followed by reflection (*manana*) on the non-dual reality that the aspirant has heard about from the teacher.³⁴⁴ Reflection is a mental action involving argumentation towards refuting the possible contradictions from other means of knowledge (perception, inference etc.) about the meaning ascertained through scriptures (i.e. Upaniṣadic texts).³⁴⁵ This process removes the doubt of an aspirant about the nature of the object (*prameya*) to be contemplated, *brahman*, and disperses all the misgivings about the Advaita system, giving rise to a tranquil state of mind that is needed for the last process, i.e. *nididhyāsana*.³⁴⁶ In short, *manana* is not mere reasoning (*tarka*) but reasoning that is in conformity with Śruti (*śrutyānugṛhīta-tarka*). It is subsidiary to *śravaṇa*, being of help in removing

³⁴⁰ *tataḥ sandehahānāya vedānta śravaṇādikam / sarvam uttaramīmāṃsāsāstram atropayujyate //*, *GD*, introductory verse 16.

³⁴¹ *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Navamavarṇakam*, p. 352.

³⁴² It is a method followed by the Advaitins to lead a seeker to the knowledge of reality by superimposing attributes to an attributeless entity and subsequently denying them.

³⁴³ Advaita holds that since any conceptualisation is limited in nature, it cannot be applied in the case of *brahman*. So, the best suitable means to describe it is to say, not such, not such’.

³⁴⁴ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī* on BS 1.1.4, pp. 108-9.

³⁴⁵ *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Navamavarṇakam*, p. 352.

³⁴⁶ See Malkovsky 2001: p. 86.

the obstacles towards grasping direct knowledge.³⁴⁷ Thus, while Advaita recognises the utility of analytical reflection, it also holds that the process of reflection must be rooted in the Vedas and also harmonious with them.³⁴⁸ MS's assertion that the entire Vedāntic scripture becomes useful and meaningful through the process of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* is reiterated in the VK as well, with the support of Śruti citations.³⁴⁹

MS holds that, as the process of *śravaṇa* and *manana* matures, one becomes fixed in *nididhyāsana*, the constant dwelling on or contemplation on the learning obtained through the earlier two stages (i.e. *śravaṇa* and *manana*). The entire meditative apparatus prescribed in Pātañjala Yoga is to be used at this stage. Accordingly, he shows in the following verse (i.e. verse 17) the utility of *yogic* practices towards obtaining the knowledge of self.³⁵⁰ To quote him; 'Then, with the maturity of that (listening to Vedāntic teaching and its reflection), contemplation on it (*nididhyāsana*) is followed. The entire Yoga scripture, in fact, gets its purpose accomplished at this stage.'³⁵¹ Constant contemplation or *nididhyāsana* is a steady state of the mind about the meaning of the scriptural texts augmented by reflection.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ See Rambachan 1991: pp. 101-8.

³⁴⁸ For details of Śaṅkara's views on reflection, see *BSB* 1.1.1; 2.1.6, 2.1.11; *BUB* 3.1.1--Intro., 1.4.6; *KUB* 1.2.8, *MāUKB* 3.1--Intro. etc. (cf. Rambachan 1991: pp. 101-8).

³⁴⁹ See Karmarkar 1962: pp. 12-3.

³⁵⁰ In contrast with the assertion made by MS, Śaṅkara's acceptance of *nididhyāsana* to be identical with *brahma-jñāna* and rejection of *yogic* discipline to be an independent means to it is noteworthy. Being dualists, the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools fail to grasp the unity of the self, which, according to Advaita, brings forth liberation. Yogic practices mere help in bringing about concentration and purification of the mind towards attainment of liberation (For details of Śaṅkara's views in this regard, see *BSB* 1.3.33, 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.3.1, *BUB* 1.4.7, *MāUKB* 3.39-40, *BhGB* 5.26-29 etc. – cf. Rambachan 1991: pp. 112-3; notes 65-73, pp. 157-8).

³⁵¹ *tatastatparipākeṇa nididhyāsananiṣṭhatā / yogaśāstraṃ tu saṃpūrṇamupakṣiṇaṃ bhavediha //*, *GD*, introductory verse 17.

³⁵² *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Navamavarṇakam*, p. 352.

Though in the tradition of Advaita this triple process (of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*) stands for the principal proximate aid to liberation, the individual role of each of these three constituents in realising *brahma-jñāna* is described differently by the interpreters. Śaṅkara holds that although listening to the scriptures precedes the other two, viz. reflection and contemplation, right perception (*samyagdarśana*) of the unity of the self is only possible when they are all unified, and not through the help of mere hearing (which is the first step).³⁵³ The post-Śaṅkara Advaitins like Vācaspati Miśra, Prakāśātmayati and their followers hold different views in this regard. Vācaspati Miśra and his followers in the *Bhāmatī* tradition hold that only contemplation is the proximate cause (*sākṣāt-kāraṇa*) of realising *brahman*, reflection being the cause of contemplation and hearing the cause of reflection, so that all three processes are the causes of *brahma-jñāna*, but in relatively distal fashion.³⁵⁴ In the *Vivaraṇa* tradition, however, Prakāśātmayati and others accept hearing about the Vedāntic teaching to be the primary cause of *brahma-jñāna*, and consider the other two processes, viz. reflection and contemplation as subsidiary (*aṅga*) to the former (*aṅgī*).³⁵⁵

When, following the above-mentioned, threefold mental discipline towards acquisition of the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahma-jñāna*), the mind gets rid of its impurities even further, the direct (*aparokṣa*), non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) knowledge of the identity between the individual self (*jīva*) and the supreme self

³⁵³ Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 10, BUB 2.4.5, p. 304.

Śaṅkara himself did not offer a detailed discussion regarding these three aids, though the later Vedāntins took it up (See *Brahmasūtra* 2000: BSB 1.1.4, pp. 100-55 and Rambachan 1991: Footnote 60, p. 157).

³⁵⁴ See *Bhāmatī* on *jijñāsādhikaraṇa* of the BS (cf. *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *bhūmikā*, p. 124) and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī* on BS 3.4.26, p. 898.

³⁵⁵ For details, see *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Pañcapādikāvivarāṇa*, *prathamavarṇakam*, pp. 29-30, p. 33, p. 38, pp. 410-3; 172-8.

(*brahman*) arises therein through the Upaniṣadic dictum ‘*tattvamasi*.’ To quote MS in verse 18; ‘Then, when the mind gets rinsed of impurities, knowledge of the Upaniṣadic great saying (e.g. ‘*tattvamasi*’) arises. From the scriptural authority (the Upaniṣadic great saying) itself, is born the non-conceptual, direct awareness of the fundamental unity of being.’³⁵⁶

Following Padmapāda, Sureśvara,³⁵⁷ Prakāśtmayati,³⁵⁸ Sarvajñātmamuni, Vidyārāṇya³⁵⁹ etc., MS holds verbal testimony (*śabda-pramāṇa*) to be the cause of immediate knowledge of *brahman/ātman*, which is technically known as *śabdāparokṣa-vāda* in Advaita.³⁶⁰ In the VK, MS holds that the Upaniṣadic great saying (‘*tattvamasi*’) only gives rise to the immediate knowledge of reality if it is freed from the four impediments, viz. longing for enjoyment of the objects of senses (*viśaya-bhoga-vāsanā*), impossibility in respect of the means of knowledge (*pramāṇagatāsaṃbhāvanā*), impossibility regarding the object of knowledge (*prameyagatāsaṃbhāvanā*), and contradictory ideas (*viparīta-bhāvanā*). Again, in his SB, MS says that when nescience and all misery brought into existence by it (i.e.

³⁵⁶ *kṣīṇadoṣe tataścitte vākyāttattvatirbhavet / sāṅskātkāro nirvikalpaḥ śabdādevopajāyate //*, GD, introductory verse 18.

³⁵⁷ For Sureśvara, as in the case of ‘*daśamastvamasi*’ (It is a popular example where by hearing it the person immediately realises that he is the tenth), immediate knowledge of ‘I am the tenth’ brings forth from the verbal knowledge rather than from the senses, immediate knowledge of the unity of being springs from the knowledge of the Upaniṣadic great sayings (*BṛVāSB* 208).

³⁵⁸ For Prakāśtmayati’s view in this context, refer to *Pañcapādikā* 1958: *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*, *prathamavarṇakam*, pp. 403-10: 172-5, 6; *dvitīyavarṇakam*, p. 452: 196-1.

³⁵⁹ Reference to the popular example of ‘I am the tenth’ in terms of immediate knowledge is given by Vidyārāṇya in his *PD* (*Pañcadaśī* 2008: *PD* 7. 23 ff., 7. 57 ff.; p. 117 ff.).

³⁶⁰ On the other hand, Vācaspati and his followers consider the mind or the inner organ as the source or instrumental cause (*karaṇa*) of the knowledge about the unity of being. This view is known as *śabda-parokṣa-vāda*, that is, verbal testimony causes the mediate knowledge of *brahman/ātman* (See *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmatī* on *BS* 1.1.1, pp. 55-8).

MS in his VK rejects this view by saying that happiness, misery etc. are perceived by the witnessing-self and they cannot be viewed by the mind. Thus, the mind or intellect gives rise to the direct perception of reality through gaining the modal cognition or cognition of partless mental modification (*akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti-jñāna*), of which verbal testimony is the instrumental cause, not the intellect or mind (For the discussion on *śabda-pramāṇa* and *śabdāparokṣa-vāda*, also see Karmarkar 1962: pp. 166-7; Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 3, part 1, pp. 171-2).

nescience) are removed through the partless modification of intellect (*akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti*)³⁶¹ produced by the Upaniṣadic text, one remains as supreme bliss, having attained his aim.³⁶² Thus, with the dawn of knowledge of reality (*tattvamasi*), nescience (*avidyā*), i.e. the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the world or that which causes reciprocal superimposition (*adhyāsa*)³⁶³ of self and not-self, is eradicated. Thus, in verse 19, MS says, ‘When knowledge of reality dawns, ignorance is eradicated. Then, as the veil (concealment) of ignorance is dispelled, doubt and error (as the projection of ignorance) get dispersed.’³⁶⁴

The concept of ignorance/nescience/illusion (*avidyā/ajñāna/māyā*) plays an important role in Advaita metaphysics, epistemology, and ethical orders. In order to emphasise the fact that nescience is not merely negative, it is said that it appears positive (*bhāvarūpa*). Ignorance (*ajñāna*) has two aspects. Whereas in its negative aspect (*āvaraṇa*) it conceals³⁶⁵ the reality and is called nescience (*avidyā*), in its positive aspect it projects (*vikṣepa*) the plurality of the world on the reality and is called illusion (*māyā*). We find explicit reference to these two-fold powers of ignorance and their effects in Śaṅkara,³⁶⁶ Vācaspati,³⁶⁷ Sarvajñātman,³⁶⁸ Vidyāraṇya³⁶⁹ and MS.³⁷⁰ Ignorance hides the true nature of an object by concealing

³⁶¹ This mental modification (*vṛtti*) is called partless (*akhaṇḍākārā*) when the implication is ultimate reality, *brahman*. It annihilates every other *vṛtti*, leading to and leaving the direct knowledge of reality before destroying itself too.

³⁶² *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 153.

³⁶³ Since superimposition is produced by beginningless nescience, it (superimposition) is also termed nescience (For details, see *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 1.1.1, p. 6 ff.).

³⁶⁴ *avidyāvinivṛttistu tattvajñānodaye bhavet / tata āvaraṇe kṣīṇe kṣīyete bhramasaṁśayau //*, *GD*, introductory verse 19.

³⁶⁵ The fact is supported by the *BhG* also; ‘...ignorance obscures insight- that is why people get confused’ (*BhG* 5.15).

³⁶⁶ Cidghanānanda 1995: *Vākyasūdhā* 13 ff. and Ānandagiri’s elucidation on them, p. 347 ff.

³⁶⁷ Projective power of ignorance has been referred to by Vācaspati etc. in the *BS* (*Brahmasūtra* 2000: *Bhāmātī* on *BS* 2.2.2, p. 492).

³⁶⁸ Veezhinathan 1985: *ŚŚ* 1.20-1.21, pp. 159-60.

³⁶⁹ Details on the power of concealment of nescience in terms of *brahman* are given in his *PD* (Swāhānanda 2005: *PD* 7.44 ff., p. 250 ff.; *PD* 7.90, 7.92, pp. 272-3).

in two ways – by showing non-existence of an object (*asattāpādaka*) and its resultant non-perception (*abhānāpādaka*). While the former is located in the consciousness limited by the mind (*antaḥkaraṇāvacchinna-caitanyaniṣṭha*), the latter is located in the consciousness limited by object (*viṣayāvacchinna-caitanyaniṣṭha*). By immediate knowledge (*aparokṣa-vṛtti*), both these types of concealment are destroyed. Thus, we have a cognition such as ‘there is a pot’ (*ghaṭaḥ asti*) ‘the pot is perceivable’ (*ghaṭaḥ bhāti*) etc. On the other hand, by mediate knowledge (*parokṣa-vṛtti*) the former (*asattāpādaka*) alone is destroyed. Thus, we have inferential knowledge, in the form ‘there is a fire’ (*vahniḥ asti*), rather than in the form ‘fire is being perceived’ (*vahniḥ bhāti*) etc. Thus, in verse 19, MS holds that when knowledge of reality dawns, nescience gets obliterated, together with its two-fold powers of concealment and projection.

MS now shows how the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*) leads the aspirant to undertake the other means that are conducive to reaching liberation proper. With the emergence of the knowledge of reality, the results of unripe or accumulated actions (*anārabdha/saṁcita-karma*) -- i.e. actions performed either in this life or a past one, but which have not yet begun to produce their fruits --³⁷¹ get eradicated completely. The effects of actions-yet-to-come (*āgāmin/kriyamāṇa-karma*), i.e. actions that are being done in the present life, to fructify in the normal course of events,³⁷² are restrained (verse 20).³⁷³ However, the latent tendencies

³⁷⁰ Refer to MS’s elucidation on Sarvajñātman’s SŚ 1.20-1.21 in his SŚSS (Giri 2007: Pt. 1, pp. 51-4). For details on MS’s treatment of the power of concealment of ignorance, see *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 587. Again, while commenting on the first verse of the *Bhāgavata*, MS mentions two aspects of ignorance, i.e. concealment and projection, and the subdivision of projection respectively. He also mentions how these two-fold powers of nescience delude the individual-self from realising the supreme reality *brahman* together with suggesting the ways for their termination (*Bhāgavata* 1815 Śakābda: p. 5).

³⁷¹ For the reference to Śaṁkara, see Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 42, p. 10.

³⁷² Refer to Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 41, p. 10 for Śaṁkara’s reference.

(*vāsanā*) do not get obliterated, due to the distractions offered by accumulated past or ripened actions (*prārabdha-karma*), i.e. those that were performed in the past life, and whose fruits are still working with the creation of the present physical body.³⁷⁴ In general, Advaita holds that, for a knower of *brahman*, *prārabdha-karma* continues until the fall of the present body (*videha-mukti*), while the accumulated or stored up (*sañcita*) actions are destroyed and actions-yet-to-come (*agāmin*) are restrained. Śaṅkara also holds that *sañcita* and *āgāmin karma*-s are destroyed by the firm conviction that ‘I am *brahman* only’ (*brahmaivāhamasmīti*), and *prārabdha-karma*-s are destroyed only when their results are experienced.³⁷⁵ MS even goes to the extent of saying that despite the grace of the Lord, *prārabdha-karma*-s do not get destroyed. They only terminate when the result produced by them are experienced by the person concerned.³⁷⁶

The consequences of *prārabdha-karma* may not be terminated in one life, paving the way for engaging in the cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra*). Therefore, one has to undergo different stages to control the body, senses and mind to achieve the cessation of suffering caused by it; that is, to keep latent tendencies or predispositions under control. This is mentioned in the verses 21 and 22. To quote MS; ‘But, due to the distraction resulting from accumulated past actions, past impression (*vāsanā*) does not get destroyed; it ceases completely through restraint, which has the maximum strength.’³⁷⁷

³⁷³ GD, introductory verse 20.

³⁷⁴ See Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 43, p. 10 for Śaṅkara’s reference.

³⁷⁵ Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 43-4, pp. 10-11.

³⁷⁶ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 892-3 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 19).

³⁷⁷ *prārabdhakarmavikṣepādvāsanā tu na naśyati / sā sarvato balavatā saṃyamenaopasāmyati* //, GD, introductory verse 21.

Next to the means of constant dwelling on the supreme reality (*nididhyāsana*), comes complete absorption in meditation on that reality (*samādhi*). However, following the line of Yoga philosophy of Patañjali, MS delineates the means of liberation in order to serve his purpose. Thus, verse 22 says, ‘Restraint (*saṁyama*) consists of the three, i.e., fixation of the mind on a particular object, meditation, and absorption.’³⁷⁸ The five disciplines, viz. *yama* etc., being precedent to them, become conducive to these three’³⁷⁹

The eight-fold limbs of Yoga are the path of austerity for an aspirant to control his mind. Having undergone these stages, the seeker is on the path to become liberated in this life (*jīvanmukta*). The eight-fold limbs are: *yama* (restraints), observances (*niyama*), *āsana* (postures), *prāṇāyāma* (control of breath), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the senses from their objects), *dhāraṇā* (fixing one’s attention), *dhyāna* (meditation), and *samādhi* (unifying concentration).³⁸⁰ While the first five limbs are called external aids (*bahiraṅga-sādhana*) to the goal of Yoga, the latter three are called the internal aids (*antaraṅga-sādhana*) to it.³⁸¹ Thus, all the eight limbs prepare the aspirant towards attaining emancipation, i.e. the unitary knowledge of *brahman-ātman*.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ *Dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* together on the same object are called *saṁyama*, though Vyāsa mentions it to be the technical term for the Yoga scripture (See *YS* 3.4 and *Vyāsabhāṣya* on it; *Yogasūtra* 1963: p. 106).

³⁷⁹ *saṁyamo dhāraṇā dhyānaṁ samādhiriti yat trikam / yamādipañcakaṁ pūrvam tadarthamupayujyate ||*, *GD*, introductory verse 22.

³⁸⁰ ‘Restraints, observances, postures, control of breath, withdrawal of the senses from their objects, fixing one’s attention, meditation, and unifying concentration are the eightfold limbs to attaining Yoga’ (*yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā dhyānasamādhayo’ aṣṭāvaṅgāni*) [Mukerji 2000: *YS* 2.29, p.206].

³⁸¹ It is noteworthy that, though both the external and internal spiritual disciplines mentioned in the eight-limbed *yoga* are meant for *saṁprajñāta-yoga*, *asaṁprajñāta-yoga* takes place even in the absence of the internal disciplines. So the internal disciplines, viz. *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* become external as far as *asaṁprajñāta-yoga* or *nīrbīja-yoga* is concerned (See *Vyāsabhāṣya* on *YS* 3.1, 3.7-8; *Yogasūtra* 1963: pp. 104, 107).

³⁸² Yājñavalkya also in his *Yogiyājñavalkya* 1.43 thus mentions that *yoga* is the union of the individual and the supreme-self (cf. Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 2, p. 59).

Having thus established all the limbs to be followed for attaining absorption (*samādhi*), MS now mentions the means conducive to speed up its attainment. Here lies the utility of absolute self-surrender to God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*). Through this special devotion to God, He (God) favours the devotee with grace towards fulfilling his (devotee's) wish. The result obtained thus makes *samādhi*'s attainment imminent.³⁸³ Mind is the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of inclination (*pravṛtti*), whereas actions are the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) of it.³⁸⁴ In the preliminary stage of *asaṃprajñāta-yoga*, there remains inclination after the destruction of actions, though in the final stage it also gets eradicated. Thus following observance of *yoga* in the form of action (*kriyā-yoga*), of which *īśvara-praṇidhāna* is a step, impurities or rather modifications of the mind arising out of worldly objects and afflicted by predispositions (*vāsanā*) are annihilated.³⁸⁵ Śaṅkara also says that mind is that which makes choices, considering pros and cons of a subject ('*saṃkalpavikalpātmakaṃ manaḥ*').³⁸⁶ MS, however, couples the practice of *Yoga* intimately with *bhakti*, in the next verse, 'Mental absorption gets accomplished fast through absolute devotion to God. Then follows abolition of the modifications of the mind and predispositions.'³⁸⁷

Latent desires or past impressions cause mental impressions like anger, jealousy etc, which stand in the way of dissolution of the mind.³⁸⁸ Though this is the same as *yogic* '*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*' (YS 1.2),³⁸⁹ its value in Vedānta is different,

³⁸³ Also see YS 1.23 and Vyāsabhāṣya on it (Yogasūtra 1963: p. 23).

³⁸⁴ See Chatterjee Sastri 1989: p. 79.

³⁸⁵ Yogasūtra 1963: YS 2.2 and Vyāsabhāṣya on it, p. 52.

³⁸⁶ Cidghanānanda 1995: Tattvabodha 28 p. 7.

³⁸⁷ *īśvarapraṇidhānāttu samādhiḥ siddhyati drutam / tato bhavenmanonāśo vāsanākṣaya eva ca //*, GD, introductory verse 23.

³⁸⁸ See Tiwari 1977: p. 99.

³⁸⁹ Mukerji 2000: p. 6.

because Vedānta accepts only a provisional status of individuality, but by including the dissolution of mind as a function of renunciation, merges it finally in the Universal self.³⁹⁰ The knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), along with elimination of mental modifications (*mano-nāśa*) and predispositions (*vāsanā-kṣaya*), takes the aspirant to final emancipation in this very life. The seeker remains in this world in human form (*jīvanmukta*) as long as the consequences of the *prārabdha-karma* continue, as attested by Vidyārāṇya too in *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha* (VPS) 1.1.³⁹¹ Thus, MS says in verse 24, ‘Knowledge of reality, annihilation of the mind and destruction of past impressions: when these three are practised together, liberation in this life becomes firm.’³⁹²

These three spiritual techniques, viz. the knowledge of the reality, dissolution of the mind, and annihilation of past impressions, are not isolated from each other, but together constitute a comprehensive spiritual discipline.³⁹³ In this connection, it is noteworthy that a modern scholar who has studied these three spiritual techniques as detailed by MS leaves room for further research.³⁹⁴ In his comments on *BhG* 6.32, MS holds that even in the presence of the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), some aspirants cannot enjoy the bliss of *jīvanmukti* because of the absence of *mano-nāśa* and *vāsanā-kṣaya*, thereby contradicting Śaṅkara. If the knowledge of reality in question is viewed as the immediate knowledge of the unity of *brahman* and the individual self (*aparokṣa-brahmātma-jñāna*), which is obtained

³⁹⁰ See Tiwari 1977: p. 98.

³⁹¹ Cf. Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnote 12, p. 6.

³⁹² *tattvajñānaṃ manonāśo vāsanākṣaya ityapi / yugapatritayābhyāsājīvanmuktirdṛdhā bhavet //*, *GD*, introductory verse 24.

³⁹³ See Tiwari 1977: pp. 101-2.

It should be noted in this context that these threefold means, i.e. knowledge of the reality (*tattva-jñāna*), extinguishing the mind (*mano-nāśa*), and destroying mental impressions (*vāsanā-kṣaya*) to attain *jīvanmukti* is explicitly mentioned by Vidyārāṇya in his *JMV* (See Fort 1998: pp. 101-2 and Mokṣadānanda 2006: *JMV* 2-3, pp. 75-275).

³⁹⁴ See Viśvarūpānanda 1997: pp. 84-8.

at the cessation of nescience, then it can be said that as per Śaṅkara's own comments on *BU* 1.4.7, 1.4.10 and *BS* 4.1.2 and 4.1.12-13, a further need to undergo *mano-nāśa* and *vāsanā-kṣaya* in order to experience the bliss of *jīvanmukti* cannot be supported. The arguments put forth by MS in favour of the utility of *mano-nāśa* and *vāsanā-kṣaya* for the knowers of *nirguṇa-brahman* for enjoying the bliss of *jīvanmukti* do not find much support in the mainstream Advaita textual sources, but may be explained as being due to MS's predilection for the *YV*.

In short, MS's position is that in spite of being in this world in liberated form, and acquiring the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), the aspirant cannot enjoy the ecstatic situation due to the presence of *prārabdha-karma*. Then he accepts renunciation through knowledge (*vidvat-saṁnyāsa*).³⁹⁵ To quote MS, verse 25, 'As effort is needed for accomplishing that part (among *tattva-jñāna*, *mano-nāśa*, and *vāsanā-kṣaya*) which is not still mastered, renunciation through knowledge is talked about in the Vedas.'³⁹⁶

Having expounded the different limbs of *yoga* mentioned above as the means of attaining and experiencing liberation while living, MS talks about its final limb, i.e. *samādhi*, together with its stages of accomplishment, in verses 26 and 27. After the attainment of conscious unifying concentration or absorption

³⁹⁵ *Saṁnyāsa* is of two types: *mukhya* and *gauṇa*. Again, whereas *mukhya-saṁnyāsa* is of two kinds: renunciation preceded by a sense of detachment from the world (*vividiṣā-saṁnyāsa*) and renunciation proper which is preceded by the dawn of knowledge of reality (*vidvat-saṁnyāsa*), *gauṇa-saṁnyāsa* is of three folds according to the qualities of serenity (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*) [cf. Brahma 1986: Footnote, p. 5; also see *BhG* 18.5].

³⁹⁶ *vidvat-saṁnyāsa-kathanam etad arthaṁ śrutau kṛtam / prāgasiddho ya evāṁśo yatnaḥ syāttasya sādhanam* //, *GD*, introductory verse 25.

Though in the Vedas, the knower of the reality only takes to *saṁnyāsa*, a distinction is made here between *vidvat-saṁnyāsa* (renunciation through knowledge) and *vividiṣā-saṁnyāsa* (renunciation through detachment) [For details, refer to Mokṣadānanda 2006: *JMV* 1, introductory verse 12 therein etc., pp. 1-74].

Vidyāranya also mentions how *vividiṣā-saṁnyāsa* and *vidvat-saṁnyāsa* help to attaining *videha-mukti* and *jīvanmukti* respectively. Besides, he classifies the *saṁnyāsin*-s into *kuṭīcaka*, *bahūdaka*, *haṁsa*, *paramahaṁsa* etc. (See Mokṣadānanda 2006: *JMV* 1, introductory verses 2-10, pp. 1-3).

(*savikalpaka-samādhi*), there occurs supra-conscious unifying concentration or absorption (*nirvikalpaka-samādhi*) in the mind in three successive stages, (i) where the aspirant awakens from it to empirical experience by himself, (ii) where he is roused by others, and (iii) where there is no arousal at all (being ever absorbed in the reality).³⁹⁷ Though all the modifications of the mind are restrained in the preliminary stages of *asaṃprajñāta-yoga*, the impressions left behind by those modifications still remain there. In the final stage, because of constant practice, they are also removed, and the aspirant gets merged in that supreme reality.³⁹⁸ Thus, in order to concentrate the mind on the eternal object or the supreme reality by restraining it (i.e. the mind) from the external objects, the *yogic* practices are of utmost importance.³⁹⁹

3.1.6. Verses 28-29: The characteristics of the living liberated (*jīvanmukta*)

After undergoing the various steps of attaining liberation explained above,⁴⁰⁰ the seeker thus becomes liberated in this life (*jīvanmukta*). Having said so, MS

³⁹⁷ See *GD*, introductory verses 26-7.

³⁹⁸ ‘Nothing is known in this stage’ (*na kiñcit saṃprajñāyate asmin*). *Nirvikalpaka-samādhi* takes place when the mind rests on the absolute consciousness like the flame of a lamp placed in a windless place (See *BhG* 6.19 and *Pañcadaśī* 2008: *PD* 1.55, p. 27). For details of how *savikalpaka-samādhi* gradually leads to *nirvikalpaka-samādhi*, also see *YS* 1.18, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12 etc. (Mukerji 2000: pp. 45, 257, 261, 263).

³⁹⁹ Thus MS’s unstinted admission of *yogic* practices prescribed by Patañjali makes his gloss a distinctive one. But it is important to note that, though Śaṅkara refutes the Yoga and its discipline as a direct means to *brahmajñāna*, in his commentary on *BS* 2.1.2 he candidly admits that the doctrines of Pātañjala Yoga that are not opposed to the teaching of the Upaniṣads are acceptable to the Advaitins (*Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 439). Moreover, many minor Upaniṣads like the *Sāmānyavedānta*, *Mahā*, *Tejobindu*, *Varāha*, *Annapurnā*, *Muktikā* etc. and many post-Śaṅkara works like the *YV* (800 CE), and the *JMV*, *PD* of Vidyāranya (14th century CE), the *GD* of MS (16th century CE) etc. lay great emphasis on Sāṃkhya ideas and Yoga practices incommensurate with Advaitic notion. This kind of development in Advaita can be regarded as the Yogic Advaita (See Fort 1998: pp. 84-125).

⁴⁰⁰ After presenting the various steps of emancipation as set forth by MS in the introduction to his commentary on the *BhG*, it can be inferred that he mentions eighteen factors that constitute the means to liberation on the basis of eighteen principal teachings of the eighteen chaptered *BhG* (though not presented in chronological order) are as follows:

emphasises the role of devotion (*bhakti*) for the aspirant who is liberated while living (*jīvanmukta*). The path of devotion (*bhakti-mārga*) consists of worshipping the qualified *brahman* (Viṣṇu) with love (*prema*) and surrender (*prapatti*). MS describes the liberated soul (*jīvanmukta*) not only as an expounder of Vedānta (*brahmavādin-s*), beyond the three qualities (*guṇātīta*), endowed with steady knowledge (*sthita-prajña*), ever engrossed in the self (*ātma-rati*), but also as one who is a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu (*viṣṇu-bhakta*), with immense devotion (*parā-bhakti*) to both the deity and the teacher. Such a person is indeed one who has accomplished everything that needs to be accomplished (*kṛta-kṛtya*), so that no scriptural injunctions are applicable to him, and being devoid of all desire, anger and jealousy, he is beyond the pale of caste and life stage (*atīvarṇāśramin*).⁴⁰¹ Thus, in verses 28 and 29, MS says, ‘He who is such a Brahmin is the best of the expounders of Vedānta. He is also called one beyond qualities, a man with firm wisdom, and a devotee of Viṣṇu,’⁴⁰² ‘(He is) also one beyond caste and life- stage, a

1. Performance of *niṣkāma-karma* after discarding *kāmya* and *niṣiddha-karmas*, 2. Discriminating knowledge (*viveka*) between the eternal and transient, 3. Indifference (*vairāgya*) to the objects of enjoyment in this world and beyond, 4. Six properties (*ṣaṭsampatti*), 5. Resolute desire for liberation (*mokṣecchā*), 6. Taking refuge in the preceptor (*guru-śaraṇa-prāpti*), 7. Listening to the Vedāntic teaching (*vedānta-vākya-śravaṇa*), 8. Understanding through reasoning (*manana*), 9. Constant dwelling (*nididhyāsana*), 10. Dawn of knowledge of the reality (*tattva-jñānodaya*), 11. Destruction of *prārabdha-karma*, 12. Fixation of mind on a particular object (*dhāraṇā*), 13. Meditation (*dhyaṇa*), 14. Conceptual absorption (*savikalpa-samādhi*), 15. The first step (*prathama -bhūmi*) of non-conceptual absorption (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*), 16. The second stage (*dvitīya-bhūmi*) of non-conceptual absorption, 17. The third stage (*trītiya-bhūmi*) of non-conceptual absorption, and 18. Annihilation of mind (*mano-nāśa*) and waning of past impression (*vāsanā-kṣaya*) [cf. Sanātanadeva 2005: *Upodghāta*, pp. 3-4 and Agrawal 2005: Vol. 1, footnote 9, p. 5; also see the introduction to the *GD* on *BhG* 3 for better clarification --- *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 134-5).

⁴⁰¹ MS’s emphasis on Patañjali’s Yoga in this context becomes more explicit if we notice below the characteristics of a *jīvanmukta*, as attested by the system, with MS’s own enumeration. During the practice of *yoga* the seeker gradually achieves the highest stage of knowledge (*prānta-bhūmi-prajñā*) and becomes liberated in this life (*jīvanmukta*) or proficient (*kuśala*) being endowed with the discriminatory knowledge (*viveka-khyāti*) [See *Yogasūtra* 1963: YS 2.27, *Vyāsabhāṣya* on it, pp. 86-8; and Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-83: Vol. 2, p. 51].

⁴⁰² *evambhūto brāhmaṇaḥ syādvaiśiṣṭho brahmavādinām / guṇātītaḥ sthitaprajño viṣṇubhaktaśca kathyate //*, *GD*, introductory verse 28.

liberated self in this life, and an absorber (only) in the self. Since all is accomplished (in him), even the scriptures withdraw from him.’⁴⁰³

Śaṅkara says that those who have developed the sense of realisation of *brahman* in all beings through the teaching of a realised spiritual guide (*sadguru*) and the Vedāntic texts are called *jīvanmukta*. Just as one having the firm conviction of the form, ‘I am the body’, ‘I am a man’, ‘I am a Brahmin’, ‘I am a *śūdra*’ etc. is in bondage, so also one who has the firm conviction of the form of immediate knowledge, ‘I am the unattached, of the form of existence-consciousness-bliss and effulgence, and am the inner guide of all (*sarvāntaryāmin*), of the form of all-pervasive space’, is a *jīvanmukta*.⁴⁰⁴ MS’s assertion that a *jīvanmukta* possesses the characteristic of being a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu is therefore noteworthy. While Śaṅkara views the *sthita-prajña* purely in an Advaitic light, both Vidyāranya and MS impart significance to *yogic* discipline as well.⁴⁰⁵ Also noteworthy is the fact that in mainstream Advaita, a *sthita-prajña*, a *jñānin*, may exhibit *bhakti* because of residual *vāsanā*, but not inevitably so. For MS, a *jñānin* having no residual *vasanā* after undergoing *mano-nāśa* and *vāsanā-kṣaya* is necessarily devoted to Lord Viṣṇu.

3.1.7. Verses 30-40: The importance of devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti*) in attaining the final emancipation (*videha-mukti*)

Having mentioned the necessity of *yogic* practices and that of devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti*) for a *jīvanmukta*, MS now puts forward the claim that devotion is

⁴⁰³ *atīvarṇāśramī jīvanmukta ātmaratistathā / etasya kṛtakṛtyatvāt śāstramasmānnivartate //*, GD, introductory verse 29.

⁴⁰⁴ Cidghanānanda 1995: *Tattvabodha* 37-8 p. 10.

⁴⁰⁵ See Fort 1998: pp. 124 -5.

a key factor also for the final emancipation, i.e. *videha-mukti* (liberation at the time of leaving one's physical body). MS says that along with the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), devotion to God in all circumstances, with body, mind and speech, becomes useful for attaining *videha-mukti*, and that devotion must thus be adopted in all stages of the quest for liberation.⁴⁰⁶ A Śruti text (ŚU 6.23) highlighting *bhakti* is the first full quotation in his versified introduction: 'Only in a man who has deepest love for God, and who shows the same love toward his teacher as toward God, do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth.' MS reiterates that devotion practised in the preceding stage (stages in *nirvikalpaka-samādhi* referred to in verse 27) is to be brought to the higher (later) stage. Otherwise, the accomplishment of success (in one's *sādhana*) becomes very unlikely because of the abundance of hindrances.⁴⁰⁷ Thus, devotion must be followed in all the stages of the quest for liberation.

Even though *bhakti* is held by MS as practicable at this higher stage, it is quite noticeable how MS posits *bhakti* again at the stage of *nirvikalpaka-samādhi*.⁴⁰⁸ MS continues to quote the *BhG* texts (*BhG* 6.44-45) according to which, through past habit itself, one is moved forward in the way of achieving liberation, attaining the highest goal after many births. However, although spiritual achievements may be made without effort in some cases, due to past impressions, the grace of God obtained through the perfection of practising disciplines in past lives (*prāksiddha-sāadhanābhyāsa*) is hard to make out (*durjñeya*).⁴⁰⁹ Here, MS hints that in order to receive the grace of God, one needs to continue spiritual discipline (*sādhana*).

⁴⁰⁶ *GD*, introductory verse 31.

⁴⁰⁷ *GD*, introductory verses 30 and 32.

⁴⁰⁸ See Das 2008.

⁴⁰⁹ *GD*, introductory verses 33-5.

Thus, MS reiterates that after each stage of this spiritual journey is accomplished, devotion to God is prescribed for attaining the subsequent stages; for without it, these later stages cannot be accomplished. In the state of *jīvanmukti*, MS holds, no result of devotion can be imagined. Just as the qualities of non-enmity etc. to others are natural to the *jīvanmukta*-s, so too is the worship of Lord Hari. At this stage, MS quotes the *BP* (*BP* 1.7.10) according to which, even for the sages who are self-immersed and freed from all bondages, devotion to God becomes spontaneous in the state of *jīvanmukti*. This indeed is the greatness of Lord Hari,⁴¹⁰ that even as they are liberated while living, they are inclined to worship the Lord. Following the text of the *BhG* itself (*BhG* 7.17), MS says further that among all devotees, one who is guided by single minded devotion to God is considered the supreme, which is referred to in verse 39; ‘Following the sentence of the Lord that of them (i.e. devotees) those who are wise, endowed with steady resoluteness and single pointed devotion are said to have excelled, it is said that one who is endowed with loving devotion is the best.’⁴¹¹

All these considerations of MS regarding *bhakti* in the present context become again explicit when we look at his view on it as a means of self-realisation in his famous work *AdS*. MS holds that the way of devotion is superior to that of knowledge, as the former gives rise to the realisation of reality more quickly than the latter, and that there is also no difference in the degree of liberation achieved through either of them.⁴¹² In his *SŚSS* too, MS echoes the view that devotion to the

⁴¹⁰ *GD*, introductory verses 36-8.

⁴¹¹ *teṣāṃ jñānī nityayukta ekabhaktirviśiṣyate / ityādivacanāt premabhakto’yaṃ mukhya ucyate //*, *GD*, introductory verse 39.

⁴¹² *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 897 (Also see Sharma 1967: p. 132).

Lord is natural for a man of steady knowledge (*sthita-prajña*).⁴¹³ Further, one of the commentators of MS meticulously supports the characteristics of a *jīvanmukta*, as set forth by MS above. While commenting on MS's eulogy to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *AdS*, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī observes that even in the state of *jīvanmukti*, MS's remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa is caused by his past dispositions of worshipping the Lord.⁴¹⁴ It is clear that MS has always been understood as holding that a self-less *bhagavadbhakta* is the highest *jñānin* and a *jīvanmukta* is spontaneously devoted to Lord Hari.

Having thus stated the above points with regard to the specific features of the *BhG*, MS expresses his attitude in verse 40 by saying, 'The Lord has divulged all this in the scripture *Gītā*. So my mind is very much keen to explain it.'⁴¹⁵ This again emulates Śaṅkara's words in his *upodghāṭa*, where he says that the Lord has imparted the twofold Vedic law of righteousness to Arjuna, who is submerged in the vast ocean of grief (*śoka*) and delusion (*moha*). These Vedic laws thus taught by the Lord, Śaṅkara adds, have been compiled by the venerable Vedavyāsa in seven hundred verses under the name *Gītā*.⁴¹⁶

3.1.8. Verses 41-46: The *Bhagavadgītā* as the means to attainment of liberation (*mokṣa*)

While setting forth the attainment of liberation (*mokṣa*) as the purpose of the *BhG* at the beginning of the introduction, MS points out the means of attaining it as well as

⁴¹³ See Giri 2007: Pt. 1, *Sārasamgraha* on *SS* 1.3, p. 20.

⁴¹⁴ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: 2.7, *Gauḍabrahmānandī- Laghucandrikā*, p. 750 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 212-3).

⁴¹⁵ *etat sarvaṃ bhagavatā gītāśāstre prakāśitam / ato vyākhyātum etanme mana utsahate bhṛṣam //*, *GD*, introductory verse 40.

⁴¹⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 5.

the factors that may act as hindrances to it. We can summarise MS's view in the following way. Performance of duties without desire for results (*niṣkāma-karma*) is said to be the root cause of liberation (verse 40). Sorrow (*duḥkha*) and delusion (*moha*), arising due to the performance of forbidden actions through deviation from one's own duty (*svadharma*), are the hindrances to it. As these hindrances are natural to mankind, they bind people in the series of suffering, paving the way for the continuation of the cycle of birth-death (*janma-maraṇa-cakra*), which all living beings want to overcome, because suffering is abhorrent to them.⁴¹⁷ In the concluding verses of the introduction, MS says that the Lord has explained this scripture (*Gītāsāstra*) to instruct those who are eager to obtain the highest end of human life (*puruṣārtha*), and wish to know how to achieve the arduous task of eradicating sorrow, delusion etc. which cause beginningless transmigration. To quote him, 'In order to enlighten a person who intensely desires to get rid of the cause of suffering (i.e. grief, delusion etc.) and eager to attain the end in human life, the Lord has uttered this revered scripture.'⁴¹⁸

MS, like other commentators on the *BhG*, makes Arjuna the representative of the entirety of human beings for whom the text is meant. And thus, the deluded mass, represented by Arjuna, is the eligible person (*adhikārin*) for studying the *BhG*. Śaṅkara too says that in order to facilitate the well-being of the common people, the Lord imparted in the *BhG* two Vedic laws (of action and renunciation respectively) to Arjuna, who is submerged in the ocean of sorrow and delusion.⁴¹⁹ Again, Rāmānuja echoed the same view in accordance with his doctrinal teaching.

⁴¹⁷ See *GD*, introductory verses 40-45.

⁴¹⁸ *evamākāṅkṣayāviṣṭaṃ puruṣārthonmukhaṃ naram / bubodhayiṣurāhedaṃ bhagavāṇśāstramuttamam* //, *GD*, introductory verse 46.

⁴¹⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, p. 5.

He holds that the Lord, the highest person (*puruṣottama*), master of all gods (*sarveśvareśvara*), assumed the human form to help the world and made Arjuna the warrior from the chariot (*rathī*), and himself the charioteer (*sārathī*).⁴²⁰

In continuation of the summary of the teaching of the *BhG*, as found both in the introductory verses in MS's commentary on it and the text of the *BhG* itself, it can be said that the foremost idea derived from the teaching of the *BhG* is a synthesis of different ways of realising God, i.e. knowledge (*jñāna*), devotion (*bhakti*), and action (*karma*).⁴²¹ It has been a debated issue from time immemorial in Indian philosophical discussion whether the way of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*) or the way of action (*karma-mārga*) or a combination of both (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya-mārga*) is conducive to liberation. The *Gītā* explores all alternatives, prescribing the acceptance of the way of knowledge and performance of actions, without desire for its results.⁴²² This view can be found in the Upaniṣads too.⁴²³ In due course, in line with the Vedāntic views, complete relinquishment of action and acceptance of renunciation through knowledge (*karmatyāgī-saṁnyāsa* / *jñānamūlaka-saṁnyāsa-mārga*) and performance without desire (*jñānayukta-karma/jñānamūlaka-karma-mārga*), two philosophical ideas, viz. 'sāṁkhya-mārga' and 'yoga-mārga' came to be originated. The *BhG* aims at exploring the latter. In the colophon of each chapter in the *BhG* it has been described as being included in

⁴²⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghātaḥ*, p. 11.

⁴²¹ As per the modern Psychology, man has three principal faculties -- intellect, will and emotion. Intellect provokes him into enquiry (knowledge - *jñāna*), will to action (*karma*) and emotion to devotion (*bhakti*). The distinction among these aspects of the mind is made possible only mentally, not in the reality. These entire mental aspects stand synthesised towards man's complete being which is in a way called 'yoga'. *BhG* teaches a unique synthesis of all these mental phenomena (See Sharma 1976: p. 33).

⁴²² See discussion above on *GD* introductory verses 6-7.

⁴²³ 'Just performing works in this world, you should desire to live your hundred years.' (*ĪU* 2), 'Knowledge and ignorance -- a man who knows them both together, passes beyond death by ignorance, and by knowledge attains immortality' (*ĪU* 11).

the Yogaśāstra in the Upaniṣads etc.⁴²⁴ In keeping with his devotional outlook, as found in the introduction to MS's *BhG* commentary, MS has upheld the importance of devotion (*bhakti*) in the final chapter as well. MS holds that, though devotion is a means for attaining success in both the ways of action and knowledge, it is the fruit (*phala*) of them too, being the highest teaching of Lord Kṛṣṇa.⁴²⁵

In short, both the invocation and the subject-matter of the versified introduction to MS's *BhG* commentary suggest that MS wants to convey through it his Advaitic teaching to the highest mendicants of Śaṅkara's order,⁴²⁶ of which he was also a member; though the strong presence of devotion to the Lord (*bhagavadbhakti*) makes him accept, to some extent, the attitude of the theistic Vedānta as well. And thus, the traditional fourfold requisites for studying a text, known as *anubandha-catuṣṭaya*, are properly maintained in his introduction (*upodghāta*) to the *BhG* commentary, in conformity with the principles of Advaita, and with an apparent mild deviation from it for accommodating his own philosophical stance.

⁴²⁴ For example, 'Thus, the first chapter entitled 'Yoga of despondency of Arjuna' in the Upaniṣads in the *Bhagavadgītā* in the knowledge of *brahman* in the science of Yoga in a dialogical form between Śrīkṛṣṇa and Arjuna' (*iti śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde arjunaviśāḍoyoga nāma prathamodhyāyaḥ*, *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: Colophon of *BhG* 1, p. 29).

The import of colophon of each chapter of the *BhG* is understood by some scholars in the following way. The *BhG* is compared with other Upaniṣads, and as the Upaniṣads deal with the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahmavidyā*), the *BhG* too on being included in the path of *yoga* (*yoga-mārga*) in the Upaniṣads is described as '*brahmavidyāyāṃ yogaśāstre*' etc. This Yoga scripture *BhG* has eighteen chapters and each chapter deals with different *yoga-s*. So is the name of each chapter there (See Ghoṣa 1994: p. 10).

⁴²⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, 18.66, p. 755 (Also see Nelson 1988: p.77).

⁴²⁶ See Nelson 1988: pp. 84-5.

Realities (*tattva-s*): the Supreme Self (*brahman*), the Individual Self (*jīva*), and the Universe (*jagat*)

As stated before, the *BhG*, along with the *BS* and the Upaniṣads, is considered a sourcebook of the Vedānta philosophy. Mutual references among these works are also conspicuous. For example, the *BS* often refers to the *BhG* as a Smṛti text, while *BhG* 13.4 mentions that the theory of ‘the field’ (*kṣetra*) and ‘the knower of the field’ (*kṣetrajñā*) has been determined by the arguments in the *Brahmasūtra*. The *BhG* also contains verses that appear also in some key Upaniṣadic texts (e.g. *KU* 1.2.18-19) with minor variations.⁴²⁷

The preceding chapter discussed how MS summarizes his commentary on the *BhG* in his versified introduction. In this chapter and the next, we will follow the *GD*’s treatment of important philosophical doctrines of Vedānta, including the supreme self (*paramātmān*) or *brahman*, individual self (*jīvātman*), universe (*jagat*) and liberation (*mokṣa*), as also how the means (*sādhana*) to its attainment forms the basis of philosophical discussion in the *BhG*. In the process, we hope to give a coherent account of the philosophical teaching of the *BhG* along with MS’s understanding of it.

In the *SB*, MS writes that the perceiver is the pure self, or *brahman*, together with its variations (caused by limiting adjunct) in the forms of God (*īśvara*), the individual self (*jīva*), and the witnessing self (*sākṣin*), while the perceived consists

⁴²⁷ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: Introduction, p. xix.

of nescience and its products or the empirical existence (*jagat-prapañca*). MS adds that only these two categories are accepted by the Vedāntins (Advaitins), and that all the categories accepted by other schools are included in these two.⁴²⁸ This sharp contrast of the seer and the seen, the perceiver and the perceived, is a key feature of much of Advaita dialectic. This can be understood in the sense that just as the individual self is nothing over and above *brahman*, the universe too lacks existence independent of *brahman*, owing to its being an illusory appearance of *brahman*. These three ontological entities of Vedānta, viz. *paramātman* or *brahman*, *jīvātman*, and *jagat* are not only the interrelated categories for the Advaitins, but also the distinctly acknowledged metaphysical entities described in the *BhG*, to which we now turn our attention in order to elucidate MS's view about these three categories.

4.1. The supreme self (*brahman*)

It is pertinent to begin with a brief account of *brahman* in the words of Śaṅkara, in order to appreciate MS's position. Śaṅkara holds that *brahman* is of the nature of truth, knowledge, and bliss.⁴²⁹ It is, by nature, auspiciousness,⁴³⁰ eternal, pure, and free. It is bereft of any attribute (*nirguṇa* or *nirviśeṣa*) and one without a second (*advitīya*). It is devoid of all sorts of limiting-adjuncts and modifications like birth, age and death. No connection with action in the sense of doership (*kartṛtva*) and enjoyership (*bhokṛtva*) can be thought of for *brahman*, as it is non-dual. It cannot be an object of logical insight and is without fear (*abhaya*). It is all-pervasive, like space, yet it dwells in the hearts of all beings. Notwithstanding this, it appears to the ignorant (*avidyācchanna*) to be possessed of name and form, on account of which it

⁴²⁸ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 89 and 93.

⁴²⁹ *Śrīśāṅkragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, *TUB*, 2.1, line 15, p. 696.

⁴³⁰ *Śrīśāṅkragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, *PUB*, 6.3, line 18, p. 297.

is regarded as the qualified entity, i.e. God. The scriptures provide two descriptions of *brahman*, e.g. (i) one with the characteristics of name, form and other attributes, and (ii) one without any of those characteristics. Though really formless, *brahman* assumes forms with its magical power, in order to grace devotees. While it is *nirguṇa*, it seems to create the empirical world in the sense of being its material cause that is transformed into the world, just as milk is transformed into curd. Such transformation is, however, only apparent in the case of *brahman*. The creation of the world is not meant to serve any purpose of *brahman*, as it is ever contented by nature. Possessed with immeasurable power, it creates the world out of its own divine play (*līlā*). Whereas *nirguṇa brahman* appears with limiting adjunct (i.e. as God) to the ignorant and so becomes for them the object of worship (*upāśya*), the enlightened one (*avidyā-nirmukta*) realises its transcendental nature without any kind of limiting adjunct, and attains it with knowledge alone, thereby identifying himself with *brahman*.

Thus, Śaṃkara's theory of the supreme-self establishes the core identity of *brahman* with the individual self and with the world, as he asserts outright that there is nothing whatsoever apart from *brahman*. The individual self is a reflection of the supreme self in the internal organ, like the semblance of the sun in water. It is only the supreme-self that, in spite of remaining immutable, appears as the individual self with transient features owing to an association with limiting adjuncts. The fact that *brahman* is, by nature, free from sin and other flaws shows the transcendental nature of the individual self. While the awareness of difference between the individual self and *brahman* arises due to the latter's association with the limiting adjuncts, the notions of the worshipped (*upāśya*) [i.e. *brahman*] and the worshipper

(*upāsaka*) [i.e. the individual self] comes into being. There are also innumerable references in Śaṅkara's writing to scriptural passages describing the creation out of *brahman* of the elements of the universe, starting with space.⁴³¹

In Śaṅkara's non-dualistic version of Vedānta, there is only one eternal reality, i.e. *brahman*, all other realities subsisting in it. The theoretical basis of the Advaita philosophy is based on the axiom that *brahman*, in spite of being attributeless and non-dual, appears with attributes due to association with nescience (*ajñāna*) and other limiting adjuncts forms. The following presents a brief account of *brahman* with attributes, the Lord, as described by MS in the *GD*.

4.1.1. A note on 'Lord' (*bhagavān*) as admitted by Madhusūdana in the

Gūḍhārthadīpikā

In the *BhG*, the term 'Lord' (*bhagavān*) bears the same connotation as the supreme self or Lord Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva. While explaining the term 'Lord' when it first occurs in *BhG* 2.2, MS quotes the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (*VuP*): 'Of the fullness of the presence of divine glory (*aiśvarya*), righteousness (*dharma*), fame (*yaśas*), auspiciousness (*śrī*), detachment (*vairāgya*) and liberation (*mokṣa*); these six (qualities) are technically known as *bhaga* (*VuP* 6.5.74).'⁴³² Here, the word 'liberation' means its cause, viz. knowledge (*jñāna*) and the Lord (*bhagavān*) is he, in whom all these qualities are eternally present, without any kind of obstruction. Quoting further from the same source, MS says that all these meanings of the term

⁴³¹ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB*, 1.3.19, line 10, p. 307; 1.2.8, line 1, p. 236; 1.2.14, line 20, p. 462; 1.1.11, lines 8-9, p. 176; 1.1.20, line 3, p. 196; 3.3.12, line 12, p. 767 (cf. Caṭṭopādhyāya 1972: p. 279); 2.1.32, lines 6-9, p. 480; 2.1.33, line 6, p. 480, line 1, p. 481; 3.2.32, line 1, p. 725; 2.3.50, line 1, p. 625; 2.3.18, lines 3-4, p. 604; 1.3.19, lines 6-7, p. 303; 1.2.4, lines 4-5, p. 234; 2.3.7, line 24, p. 586.

⁴³² *aiśvaryasya samagrasya dharmasya yaśasaḥ śrīyaḥ / vairāgyasyātha mokṣasya ṣaṇṇām bhaga itīṅganā //*

bhagavān show that it is applicable to Lord Vāsudeva only. ‘The Lord is one who knows the origin (*utpatti*) and destruction (*vināśa*), prosperity and paucity, and knowledge (*vidyā*) and ignorance (*avidyā*) of creatures (*VuP* 6.5.78)’⁴³³

It may also be noted that while quoting *VuP* 6.5.74, MS maintains that the expression ‘in full’ (*samagra*) is connected with each of the six qualities mentioned in this verse. The term ‘liberation’ (*mokṣa*) indicates its cause, viz. knowledge (*jñāna*), while *inḡanā* means the technical name or appellation (*saṃjñā*). He is the Lord (*bhagavān*), in whom all these divine qualities (*aiśvaryādi*)⁴³⁴ are present eternally and without any obstruction, i.e. uninterruptedly (*nityam apratibandhena*). MS emphasizes that the suffix *-vān* added to *bhaga* is used in the sense of everlasting possession.⁴³⁵ Baccā Jhā explains that the word *samagra* has to be understood as qualifying each of the six qualities mentioned in the *VuP* verse, but taken together, not in isolation. He does this by raising the objection that the word *bhagavān* is used even in the cases where great sages are addressed, even though such people may not be characterised simultaneously by the fullness of all six qualities. If the word *bhagavān* can be so employed, then the word *bhagavān* will not serve the purpose of expressing the supreme excellence that characterises the Lord. Baccā Jhā holds that MS uses the expression *nityam apratibandhena* in order to avert this objection. None of these qualities, when characterising the great sages, can be regarded as eternal, since in such cases, these qualities are produced

⁴³³ *utpattiṃ ca vināśaṃ ca bhūtānāmāgatiṃ gatim / veti vidyāmaavidyāṃ ca sa vācyo bhagavāniti // Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 31-2. There is a clear indication in *VuP* 6.5.76 that the term *bhagavān* can only mean Vāsudeva as the supreme *brahman*, and nobody else. Curiously, this verse is not quoted by MS, perhaps inadvertently (Dvivedī 1975: Vol. 1, footnote 1, p. 75 and Sanātanadeva 2005: Footnotes 1-2, p. 42).

⁴³⁴ E.g. divine glory, righteousness, fame, auspiciousness, detachment and liberation.

⁴³⁵ *samagrasyeti pratyekam sambandhaḥ. mokṣasyeti tatsādhanasya jñānasya. inḡanā saṃjñā. etādrśaṃ samagram aiśvaryādikam nityam apratibandhena yatra vartate sa bhagavān (Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 32).

(*utpanna*). Furthermore, in such cases, such qualities may also be obstructed. But in the case of the Lord, such qualities are eternal (*nitya*) and not subject to any obstruction (*apratibandha*). However, Baccā Jhā also says that the word *ādi* employed in the expression *samagram aiśvaryādikam* cannot be applied to righteousness (*dharma*), because in the case of the Lord, *dharma* cannot be a property that is produced. This is based on the standard Mīmāṃsā position that *dharma* is always something that is produced. On reflection, Baccā Jhā explains that the word *dharma* means the absence of all demerits (*samagra-pāpma-nivṛtti*), which is indeed a characteristic of the Lord. Alternatively, *dharma* may also indicate the activities that produce merit (*puṇya-janaka-kriyā*). Since the Lord, at the beginning of each new creation (*sr̥ṣṭi*), instructs people to perform meritorious deeds (*sampradāya-pravartana*), *dharma*, when understood in this sense, may very well be present in the Lord.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, the word ‘full’ (*samagra*) cannot be related with ‘liberation’ (*mokṣa*), because in the Advaita Vedānta, liberation is of the nature of eternal-pure-non-dual-*brahman* (*nitya-śuddha-brahma-svarūpa*), and cannot admit of degrees. In order to justify the application of *samagra* in the context of ‘liberation’, MS says that the term ‘liberation’ denotes here ‘knowledge,’ the cause of liberation.⁴³⁷

4.1.2. The Lord as the supreme self in *Bhagavadgītā* and *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

It needs to be mentioned at the outset that by the time MS wrote the *GD*, the essential nature of *brahman* as existence, consciousness, and bliss had been

⁴³⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ*, pp. 1-2 (Also refer to Sanātanadeva 2005: Footnote 2, p. 41).

⁴³⁷ See Sanātanadeva 2005: Footnote 2, p. 41 (Sometimes, a word is used figuratively to indicate the cause of the entity denoted by that word. This is known as ‘*kāraṇe karyopācāraḥ*’).

discussed thoroughly by the earlier Advaitins. In order to defend himself against the fierce attack of the then Vaiṣṇava schools, such as that of Madhva, MS had to determine cautiously to what extent ‘existence’ and ‘consciousness’ are distinctive as the essential nature of *brahman*, and whether ‘bliss’ could be mentioned along with them. Thus, the *SB* states that *brahman* is all-pervasive, non-dual and of the nature of supreme bliss and consciousness.⁴³⁸ However, in the *AdS*, MS justifies at length that in spite of being marked (*upalakṣita*) by all these characteristics, *brahman* is in fact unconditioned or unqualified in nature.⁴³⁹ Let us now proceed to discuss in brief how the *BhG* depicts *brahman* and how MS describes it accordingly in his *GD*.

The second group of six chapters of the *BhG* (*dvitīya-ṣaṭka*, i.e. chapters 7-12) is said to mainly deal with the reality of the supreme self (*paramātmān*) or *brahman*. MS holds that ‘the supreme self’ is the referent of the term ‘that’ (*tat*) in the Upaniṣadic *mahā-vākya* ‘That thou art’, further specifying that it is of the nature of supreme-bliss (*paramānanda*). While chapter seven of the text (*jñāna-vijñāna-yoga*) imparts the knowledge of the supreme self in all its facets, the eighth chapter (*akṣara-brahma-yoga*) deals with meditation on the imperishable *brahman*, the ninth articulates the greatness of the supreme self, i.e. the greatest knowledge (*rāja-vidyā*), the tenth describes the manifestation of divine powers (*vibhūti*) of the Lord, the eleventh gives a detailed account of the universal form (*viśva-rūpa*) of the Lord, and the twelfth discusses unceasing devotional meditation (*bhakti-yoga*) on the supreme self as the means of attaining it.

⁴³⁸ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 82 (For details, see Gupta 2006: p. 66).

⁴³⁹ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp, 750 ff.; 768 ff. (Also see Gupta 2006: pp. 71-3 for a detailed account).

According to MS's commentary, the *BhG* (*BhG* 10.12-13 etc.) unequivocally equates Lord Kṛṣṇa with the *brahman* of the Upaniṣads. *BhG* 7.7 asserts that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the absolute metaphysical reality, as there is nothing whatsoever that transcends him. *BhG* 11.43 also declares him to be unequalled, the mightiest in all the three worlds.⁴⁴⁰ The depiction of his divine power and universal form of the Lord, in chapters ten and eleven, clearly portray Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme *brahman*, but endowed with determinations or attributes (*saviśeṣa/saguṇa*). If it is asked as to how Kṛṣṇa, the son of a man named Vasudeva, can be equated with the Lord, in terms of the Upaniṣadic *brahman* with attributes, *BhG* 4.6-8 resolves it by drawing on the concept of divine descent or incarnation (*avatāra*). Here the Lord says that although unborn and imperishable, he is born out of his own power or innate *māyā* (*ātma-māyā*). All these views have been explained in a thoroughgoing manner in the *GD*.

While explaining the concept of the divine incarnation of the Lord, MS quotes Śaṃkara's introduction to the *BhG* commentary and Ānandagiri's sub-commentary, to the effect that in spite of being birthless (*aja*), changeless (*avyaya*), the Lord of all creatures, eternal, pure, conscious and free by nature (*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva*), the Lord appears as if he is embodied (*dehavān iva*) through his magical power (*māyā*). With no purpose of his own to serve, the Lord appears for the sake of showering grace on creatures in bondage. MS holds that Śaṃkara's comments mean that the eternal causal limiting adjunct (*kāraṇopādhi*) of *brahman*, which is named as *māyā*, and which possesses numerous powers, is the body (*deha*) of the Lord. MS here refers to a different view (that is also stated later

⁴⁴⁰ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 197-8.

by Nīlakaṇṭha) which holds that in the case of supreme Lord, there cannot be any relation of a body and its possessor (*deha-dehi-bhāva*). The supreme self, Lord Vāsudeva, is eternal, omnipresent (*vibhu*), a mass of existence-conscious-bliss (*saccidānanda-ghana*), full (*paripūrṇa*), and unconditioned (*nirguṇa*), and is himself his body. He does not have either a material (*bhautika*) or an illusory (*māyika*) body. MS, however, does not pass any judgment about this second interpretation, but merely seeks to substantiate his view by quoting *BS* 2.3.9 and 2.3.17 along with the Śruti texts (*Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad* 2.1.3, *BU* 4.5.14 and *CU* 7.4.21). MS asserts that despite there being really no such relation of a body and the embodied in the case of the Lord, such a relation appears to pertain to the Lord as mere *māyā*. MS expresses his devotional outlook in this connection with the support of the *BP* texts: ‘Know that Kṛṣṇa is the self of all beings. In spite of that, he appears here as an embodied being, through *māyā*, for the benefit of the world’ (*BP* 10.14.55) and ‘Oh what good luck, oh what good luck, for the cowherd Nanda and the inhabitants of Vraja, whom the eternal *brahman*, of the nature of fullness and supreme bliss, has befriended!’ (*BP* 10.14.32). Having said this, MS indicates in an indirect manner the view of others like Rāmānuja etc., who admit the actuality of this relation (of a body and its holder) in respect of the Lord, but desists from criticising them, on the grounds that it would be a futile exercise.⁴⁴¹

Ānandagiri makes Śaṁkara’s view explicit, saying that in the case of Lord, the fact of his being born is merely an apparent truth (*prātibhāsika-satya*), and not the transcendental or absolute one (*pāramārthika-satya*).⁴⁴² While explaining *BhG*

⁴⁴¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 188-90 (For Rāmānuja’s view, refer to *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghāṭaḥ*, pp. 5-6; *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, pp. 79, 91, 366-8 etc.).

⁴⁴² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Ānandagirivyākhyā*, pp. 186-90.

4.5, MS maintains that from the empirical point of view, acceptance of bodies for the Lord is like admitting the rising of the sun, which in fact neither rises nor sets, but is ever present.⁴⁴³ One may now wonder if by ‘acceptance of bodies for the Lord’ is meant by MS that the body of the Lord is ever present, being *māyā* itself. MS justifies, through the theory of divine incarnation, the Advaita view regarding the unqualified nature of *brahman* which, due to *māyā*, appears to be qualified in nature. By referring to the views of Śaṅkara, Ānandagiri, and an unnamed author whose view has been referred to also by Nīlakaṇṭha, and also with the textual support of the *BP*, MS not only remains rooted in his own non-dualistic stance, but also ensures that his view regarding the Lord is not at odds with those who (like Nīlakaṇṭha) are not antagonistic to the propagation of the spirit of devotion within the parameters of a non-dualistic ontology. Viśvanātha Cakravartin (18th century CE), who follows the tradition of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, refers to this view of MS along with those of Śrīdhara Svāmin and Rāmānuja in this context in his commentary on the *BhG*, which is called the *Sārārthavarṣiṇī*.⁴⁴⁴ This is an indication of a broad level of acceptability for MS’s resolution of this issue for the dualistic devotional Vedāntin authors, though it is not quite in conformity with that of Rāmānuja, as MS himself has indicated.

4.1.3. The nature of the supreme self

After describing his two primordial natures (*prakṛti*-s), inferior (*aparā*) and superior (*parā*), which include both insentient and sentient beings (*BhG* 7.4-7.5), the Lord expresses his supremacy over these, saying that he is the creator and

⁴⁴³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 185-6.

⁴⁴⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Sārārthavarṣiṇī*, p. 120.

destroyer of the entire cosmos, as all beings have their source in these two *prakṛti*-s (*BhG* 7.6 and 10.8). MS says in this connection that the Lord, in association with his limiting adjuncts in the form of the ‘field’ (*kṣetra*) and the ‘knower of the field’ (*kṣetrajña*), is omniscient (*sarvajña*), the Lord of all (*sarveśvara*), omnipotent (*ananta-śakti*), endowed with nescience as limiting adjunct (*māyopādhi-upahita*), the cause of origination (*prabhava*) and destruction (*pralaya*) of this entire world consisting of all products, whether dynamic or static. This view is also echoed in the *BS*, which says ‘That (is Brahman) from which (are derived) the birth etc. of all this.’ Śaṅkara comments that in this aphorism, *brahman* is the source of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, as the same order is also found in the Śruti text; ‘That from which these beings are born...’ (*TU* 33.1.1).⁴⁴⁵ MS further adds that just as in the case of dream objects the individual self is the cause of its creation and destruction, so the Lord himself, being the basis (*āśraya*) and object (*viṣaya*) of nescience, is both the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) and seer (*draṣṭā*) of this illusory world-appearance.⁴⁴⁶ In his *SB* too, MS maintains that *brahman*, being qualified by omniscience etc. becomes the material and efficient cause of the universe.⁴⁴⁷ The *GD* asserts that this *brahman* is called Vāsudeva, and is the cause of origination as the material and efficient cause of the universe, and that the sustenance and destruction of this universe also proceed from him.⁴⁴⁸

We saw that MS refers to ‘the knower of the field’ (*kṣetrajña*) as a limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) of the Lord. Baccā Jhā explains that *kṣetrajña* is said to be in the nature of its limiting adjunct when considered from the standpoint of the *jīva*, i.e.

⁴⁴⁵ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 1.1.2, p. 85 (Also see Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 199).

⁴⁴⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 348-9.

⁴⁴⁷ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 76-7

⁴⁴⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam* and *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 447.

consciousness associated with the *jīva* (*jīvopahita-caitanya*).⁴⁴⁹ He also explicates MS's stance about *brahman* as the material (*upādāna*) cause and efficient (*nimitta*) cause of the world by analogy with the spider, which is both the material and efficient cause of the web it weaves.⁴⁵⁰

One may question how *brahman*, which is pure consciousness, can be the material cause of an unconscious world, as an effect and its material cause have to be homogeneous. Moreover, a material cause must undergo some transformation when the effect is produced, but *brahman* is said to be immutable. In answer, it is said that *brahman* is by nature ever conscious and is the substratum of the entire cosmos, which is by nature inert, as the material cause that undergoes transformation is inert nescience (*avidyā*). The cosmos is also an illusory appearance or apparent transformation (*vivarta*) superimposed due to nescience on *brahman*, and not a real transformation (*pariṇāma*) of *brahman*.⁴⁵¹

Another verse, *BhG* 18.61, says that the Lord resides in the heart of all beings, revolving them through his power (*māyā*), as if they were mounted on a machine. MS, following Śaṅkara, says that here the term 'Lord' (*īśvara*) means one who is capable of ruling (*īś*), and he is none other than Lord Nārāyaṇa, the internal ruler of all (*sarvāntaryāmin*). In support of his views, MS quotes the Śruti texts, 'This self (*ātman*), who is present within but is different from the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, and who controls the earth from within, he is the inner controller, the immortal (*BU* 3.7.3)', 'The entire creation, whatever is seen or heard, Nārāyaṇa exists by pervading all that from within and

⁴⁴⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ*, p. 131.

⁴⁵⁰ The reference is also found in Śaṅkara's comments on *BS* 2.4.27 (*Brahmasūtra* 2000: pp. 428-9) and *VS* by Sadānanda (Nikhilananda 1997: *VS* 2.55-56, pp. 40-42).

⁴⁵¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ*, p. 137.

without' (*Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 9.5).⁴⁵² MS adds that though the Lord is all-pervasive, he resides in the heart or the internal organ of all beings, just as, despite being the ruler of seven continents, Lord Rāmacandra manifested himself in Uttarakośala.⁴⁵³ Śaṅkara, too, while explaining the above-mentioned *BU* text, refers to the Lord as Nārāyaṇa, who restrains and governs the earth.⁴⁵⁴

The above-mentioned statements in the *BhG* point to the immanence of the supreme self as the inner controller (*antaryāmin*) of all beings.⁴⁵⁵ This supreme being is variously described as being characterized by *parā* and *aparā prakṛti* (*BhG* 7), *kṣetrajña* and *kṣetra* (*BhG* 13), *kṣara* (mutable or transient) and *akṣara* (immutable or intransient) *puruṣa* (*BhG* 15). However, at the end of the fifteenth chapter called *puruṣottama-yoga*, the Lord declares that he is beyond *akṣara* and *kṣara puruṣa*, and is known as the supreme person (*puruṣottama*). He who knows him as this supreme person knows all that is to be known (*BhG* 15.18-19). Thus, the Lord who is immanent in all beings as the inner controller is also the transcendent supreme being or the supreme person (*puruṣottama*) [*BhG* 15.18].

MS highlights this, holding that God, who has been thus described as distinct from *kṣara* and *akṣara*, is the supreme person (*puruṣottama*). He holds that the supreme God (*parameśvara*) is most excellent (*utkrīṣṭatama*), the immutable seed of everything (*sarva-kāraṇa*), superior to *māyā*, the unmanifest (*avyākṛta*), and even *brahman*, as has been stated previously in '...I am the foundation of *brahman*...' (*BhG* 14.27) and '...that supreme domain of mine...' (*BhG* 15.6); and also in the Śruti passages like 'That person, indeed, ...farther than the farthest, imperishable'

⁴⁵² Translation from Gambhirananda 2000a: p. 982.

⁴⁵³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 748.

⁴⁵⁴ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 10, p. 432.

⁴⁵⁵ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 199-200.

(*MuU* 2.1.2) and ‘He is the highest person’ (*CU* 8.12.3). MS does not fail to express his personal devotion to this Lord when he says that it is well known in the world [in common speech] that Lord Hari alone is stated in poems as the supreme person. MS summarises his views in two verses, the first of which may be translated in the following manner:

The glory of Nārāyaṇa, the supreme person, whose body is made up only of existence, consciousness, and bliss (*saccit-sukhaika-vapuṣa*); and who, behaving like a human being out of compassion, taught Pārtha his (Nārāyaṇa’s) own divinity by advising him about the supreme realities, is beyond measure in magnitude.⁴⁵⁶

While explaining the Upaniṣadic texts cited above by MS, Śaṅkara adopts his usual non-dualistic approach that helps us place his position on a par with that of MS. While commenting on *MuU* 2.1.2, Śaṅkara says that the other indestructible, called the unmanifest, is higher than all changes (*vikāra*), and that the person, the unconditioned, is superior to the high unmanifest.⁴⁵⁷ While commenting on *CU* 8.12.3, he says that just as a rope, which appears as a snake due to delusion before the discriminatory knowledge between rope and snake arises, but fuses into its own form as rope once it is viewed in bright light, so also, compared to a person that is destructible (*kṣara-puruṣa*) and indestructible (*akṣara-puruṣa*), the person who is established in his own nature is the highest person (*uttama-puruṣa*). Śaṅkara adds further that the *BhG* too explains the ‘highest person’ in the same way.⁴⁵⁸

Viśvanātha Cakravartin, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava author, quotes from the *GD* on *BhG* 15.19-20 (where MS eulogises Lord Kṛṣṇa) and notes that both Śrīdhara

⁴⁵⁶ *kāruṇyato naravad ācarataḥ parārthān pārthāya bodhitavato nijam īśvaratvam. saccitsukhaikavapuṣaḥ puruṣottamasya nārāyaṇasya mahimā na hi mānameti* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 629-30).

⁴⁵⁷ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, p. 344 (The order in this edition as *MuU* 2.2 is the same as *MuU* 2.1.2) [Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. III, *MuUB*, 2.1.2, p. 153].

⁴⁵⁸ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 9, p. 540 (Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. IV, *CUB*, 8.12.3, pp. 903-4).

Svāmin and MS have described the supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is equated with the Advaitic unconditioned *brahman* per se. Viśvanātha explicitly salutes and notes his agreement with these two Advaitic interpreters of the *BhG*, saying that there can be no objection against their explanation of verses *BhG* 15.16-18 (which eulogise Lord Kṛṣṇa).⁴⁵⁹

Thus, by describing the Lord as *puruṣottama*, as distinct from *kṣara* and *akṣara puruṣa*, MS, following the lead of Śaṅkara, hints at the unconditioned nature of *brahman* in spite of its apparent conditioned nature. Yet his overflowing devotion to the qualified reality as described above is certainly a distinctive mark of his own commentary, which is held in high esteem by the later commentators of the *BhG*, who prefer to adopt the dualistic devotional approach. Further, the nature of the supreme self is explicated by the Lord himself when he says; ‘For I am the foundation of *brahman*, of the immortal and intransient, of the sempiternal Law, and of perfect bliss’ (*BhG* 14.27). Though there seem to be two separate entities expressed by the terms ‘I’ and ‘*brahman*’ in the present context, since *brahman* cannot be its own ground, MS, following Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic doctrine, distinguishes between two aspects of *brahman*, i.e. unconditioned and conditioned, in order to explain the expressions ‘I’ and ‘*brahman*’ respectively. He holds that the unconditioned (*nirvikalpaka*) Vāsudeva is the implied meaning (*lakṣyārtha*) of the term ‘that’ (*tat*) (employed in the sentence ‘That thou art’) and is the supreme reality in the nature of unconditioned and attributeless existence, consciousness and bliss. This is the base/ground (*pratiṣṭhā*) of *brahman*, who is conditioned

⁴⁵⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Sārāthavarṣiṇī*, p. 404.

(*sopādhika*), the cause of origin, sustenance and dissolution of the world, and is the expressed meaning (*vācyārtha*) of the term ‘that’ (*tat*) [in ‘That thou art’]. As Lord Vāsudeva is by nature natural, bereft of imaginary attributes (*kalpita-rūpa-rahita*), one meditating on the unconditioned *brahman* becomes eligible for becoming *brahman*. Lord Vāsudeva is the basis of *brahman*, who is indestructible (*vināśa-rahita*), bereft of transformations (*vipariṇāma-rahita*), without decay (*apakṣaya-rahita*), happiness (*sukha*) in the nature of supreme bliss (*paramānanda-rūpa*) that transcends space and time, and he is also attainable through merit (*dharma*), which is characterised as steadiness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*).⁴⁶⁰

In order to substantiate the point under discussion, MS quotes the *BP* verses, and subsequently conveys their import in his own way. In one of the relevant verses, Brahmā tells Lord Kṛṣṇa: ‘You are the only self, immortal, the ancient one, the truth, self-effulgent, infinite and without beginning, eternal, imperishable, immense bliss, pure, complete, non-dual, free, and bereft of any limitation (*BP* 10.14.23).’ Accordingly, MS holds that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the *brahman*, the self devoid of all limiting adjuncts or limitations (*sarvopādhi-sūnya*). In another verse, Śuka also says to king Parīkṣit without any eulogy: ‘The essential substance of all beings rests in the conditioned *brahman*, and of that again, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the essence, so what can there be beyond him?’ (*BP* 10.14.50). MS goes on to say that all effects have their essential nature, the supreme reality in the form of being located in the conditioned (*sopādhika*) *brahman*, which assumes the form (*ākāra*) of the effects, for no effect can have more reality than that of its cause. As the conditioned *brahman* is imagined on the unconditioned *brahman*, and as what is imaginary

⁴⁶⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 606-7.

cannot have any other reality than what belongs to its own substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*), Lord Kṛṣṇa is by nature the absolute truth, the unconditioned (*nirupādhika*) *brahman*, the basis of all imaginary creations, the supreme reality that is the culminating point of all the characteristics of *brahman* mentioned above. MS in his usual manner concludes the discussion of this point by eulogising the supreme *brahman* equated with Lord Kṛṣṇa in the following terms: ‘I salute that ineffable light, the son of Nanda, who takes away the bondage of his supplicants, who is the supreme *brahman* in a human form as the essence of all that is the quintessence of loveliness.’⁴⁶¹

The idea that Lord Viṣṇu should be equated with *brahman* is upheld by MS in clear terms also in the first benedictory verse of the *AdS*: ‘Viṣṇu, who is the substratum of the illusory world of duality such as the notions of the cogniser (*pramāṭṛtva*) etc., who is of the nature of truth, consciousness and bliss, who is to be apprehended through the impartite knowledge arising from the *mahāvākya*-s like ‘*tattvamasi*’ etc. which are like the crown of the Śruti, surpasses on his own, after shaking off the bondage (of the primordial nescience-*mūlāvidyā*) and being bereft of all mental constructions, i.e. visible objects imagined through nescience (*vikalpa*) as if having attained liberation, which is by nature the supreme bliss only.’⁴⁶² While commenting on it, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī refers to Viṣṇu to be *jīva*, when understood in the sense of pervasiveness.⁴⁶³ In another context in the *AdS*, while resolving the apparent contradiction among the Śruti texts that arises from the fact that they cannot describe both the qualified and unqualified *brahman* as possessing

⁴⁶¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 607-8.

⁴⁶² *māyākālpitamāṭṛtāmukhamṛṣādvaitaprapaṇcāśrayaḥ* *satyajñānasukhātmakaḥ*
śrutiśikhhotthākhaṇḍadhīgocaraḥ / *mithyābandhavidhūnanena paramānandaikatānātmaḥ mokṣaṁ*
prāpta iva svayaṁ vijayate viṣṇurvikalpojñhitaḥ // (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 1-2).

⁴⁶³ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: *Gauḍabrahmānandī (Laghucandrikā)*, p. 2 (Also see Nair 1990: p. 35).

the absolute reality, MS maintains that while the Śruti texts conveying the qualified *brahman* possess empirical truth, those of conveying the unqualified *brahman* enjoy absolute truth, thereby affirming the fact that Śruti talks about the dual aspects of *brahman*, qualified and unqualified,⁴⁶⁴ which also finds support from Śaṅkara's explanation of *BS* 1.1.11.⁴⁶⁵

In the present context, we may take note of Śaṅkara's understanding of the two above-mentioned terms 'I' and '*brahman*' as used in *BhG* 14.27, in order to compare how MS effectively emphasises the devotional aspect. According to Śaṅkara, 'I' here means the indwelling self (*pratyag-ātmā*) that is the abode of *brahman*, the supreme self, which is of the nature of immortality (*amṛtatva*) etc., and that the indwelling self is determined to be the supreme self by right knowledge (*samyag-jñāna*). This fact, Śaṅkara asserts, has already been stated in the immediately preceding verse 'He who attends on me unstrayingly with the discipline of the yoga of devotion and thus transcends the *guṇas* is fit to become *brahman*' (*BhG* 14.26). Thus, for Śaṅkara, the expression 'right knowledge' is the culmination of unswerving adherence to the discipline of the *yoga* of devotion (*avyabhicāri-bhakti-yoga*) [referred to in *BhG* 14.26]. Śaṅkara maintains that since the power and its possessor are non-different, the power of God through which *brahman* shows his grace to his devotees is the same as *brahman*. Alternatively, Śaṅkara says, 'I' and '*brahman*' refer to the unconditioned and conditioned *brahman* respectively, where the former is the ground of the latter.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: *Advaitasiddhi* text and *Gauḍabrahmānandī* thereon, p. 720 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 68).

⁴⁶⁵ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 136.

⁴⁶⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 606-8 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 992-3).

Śrīdhara Svāmin mentions that the referent of the word ‘I’ (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa) is the foundation (*pratiṣṭhā*) or image (*pratimā*) of *brahman*. In other words, ‘I’ (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa) refers to the *brahman* amalgamated (*ghanībhūtaṁ brahmaivāham*), just as the solar orbit (*sūryamaṇḍala*) is light amalgamated (*ghanībhūta-prakāśa*).⁴⁶⁷ The idea is that, just as the sun is both the form of light and also the basis of light, Lord Kṛṣṇa, being himself *brahman*, is also the basis of *brahman*. The interpretation of these two terms (viz. ‘I’ and ‘*brahman*’) proposed by MS is similar. Viśvanātha, in the course of explaining the point in question and in order to highlight the role of devotion in this context, refers to the respective *BhG* interpretations of Śrīdhara Svāmin and MS. Apart from Śrīdhara’s interpretation of the *BhG*, Viśvanātha also refers to Śrīdhara’s commentary on *VuP* 6.7.76 to the effect that Lord Viṣṇu is the shelter or basis of the omniscient self or supreme *brahman*. While referring to MS, Viśvanātha says that MS explains the context by saying that the referent of ‘I’ (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa) alone is the basis or culmination (*pariyāpti*) or complete fullness (*paripūrṇatā*) of *brahman*. Viśvanātha also cites MS’s verse eulogising Lord Kṛṣṇa as the son of Nanda etc.⁴⁶⁸

Thus, it can be concluded that the *GD* stresses the personalistic *brahman*, who, being endowed with characteristics (*saviśeṣa*), is known as Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu etc., although, in accordance with Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic interpretation, MS also identifies the supreme self with the supreme reality. In summary, MS admits *brahman* as having dual ontological status (with attributes (*saviśeṣa* or *saguṇa*) and without (*nirviśeṣa* or *nirguṇa*)) and this is what is indicated by the term ‘that,’ which occurs in the sentence ‘*tattvamasi*’.

⁴⁶⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: Śrīdharaīvyākhyā, pp. 606-7.

⁴⁶⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): pp. 387-8.

4.2. The individual self (*jīvātman*) as indicated in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

We have seen that MS divides the *BhG* into three parts, viz. *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*-s,⁴⁶⁹ corresponding respectively to ‘thou’, ‘that’ and ‘art’ of the Upaniṣadic *mahā-vākya* ‘That thou art’.⁴⁷⁰ We have also seen that the terms ‘thou’ and ‘that’ are understood to be personified by the two principal characters of the text, Arjuna (as the representative of the individual selves or all human beings in general) and Lord Kṛṣṇa (the supreme self) respectively. According to MS’s division, the first six chapters of the text are concerned with explicating the meaning of ‘thou’, chapters 7-12 are concerned with ‘that’, and the remainder with ‘art’, though not understood in the strict sense of absolute identity.

The referent of the term ‘thou’ is understood in terms of Arjuna’s character as depicted in the *BhG*, in which he represents the individual self (*jīvātman*) after being instructed by the supreme self (*paramātman*), represented by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna is bewildered by grief and delusion due to the lack of discriminative knowledge between body and self, and thus he must be instructed about the various means of self-realisation, viz. *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, which are to be followed by the individual self throughout its quest for liberation. Though the term ‘individual self’ is used in the *BhG* in the sense of self or supreme-self or *brahman*,⁴⁷¹ there are also other words that have been used to denote the individual

⁴⁶⁹ We have mentioned earlier that, though this division implies considerable originality of thought, it is not to be viewed firmly. The ideas of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna* are scattered throughout the text, though the said division corresponds to the respective ideas strongly. However, despite lack of agreement regarding the subject-matter of each six chapters of the text it has been a practice among many traditional commentators to consider it having three sections that consist of six chapters each.

⁴⁷⁰ *GD*, introductory verses 4-6.

⁴⁷¹ Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *BS* says that when *brahman*, that is, consciousness is accepted as the seer in its primary sense, usage of the word ‘self’ in the sense of individual-self is justified (*Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 1.1.6, p. 173).

self, namely *puruṣa*, *brahma*, *akṣara*, *kṣetrājña*, *parā-prakṛti* etc. Though all these words convey different meanings in different contexts and are sometimes interpreted differently by various commentators, they usually denote the individual self in the context in which they are used.⁴⁷²

After this brief note on *jīvātman*, as depicted in the *BhG*, let us now discuss MS's philosophical view regarding this ontological entity.

4.2.1. The nature of the individual self (*jīvātman*)

The second chapter of the *BhG* primarily deals with the exposition of the individual self. The imparting of self-knowledge as a philosophical teaching by the Lord to Arjuna begins from the eleventh verse onwards. In order to ascertain the nature of the true knowledge of the self that was imparted to Arjuna, MS, an astute dialectician, ascertains the eternal nature of the self first by applying the technical terminology of the Navya-nyāya (i.e. the Neo-logic). That the self is not the counter-correlative (*pratiyogin*) of an antecedent non-existence (*prāgabhāva*),⁴⁷³ he says, is attested by the Lord's statement, 'Never was there a time when I did not exist, or you, or these kings' (*BhG* 2.12). That the self is not a counter-correlative of non-existence caused by destruction (*pradhvaṃsābhāva*) is proved by the other part of the Lord's statement; 'Nor shall any of us cease to exist hereafter' (*BhG* 2.12).

⁴⁷² See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 207-8.

⁴⁷³ According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, the non-existence of an effect (like a pot) before its production is called prior non-existence or antecedent non-existence (*prāgabhāva*) of that effect, while the pot is the counter-correlative (*pratiyogin*) of that non-existence. The self is not a counter-correlative of its prior non-existence, as it is always existent. It is not a counter-correlative of its non-existence caused by its destruction (*pradhvaṃsābhāva*) as well, as it cannot be destroyed (See Virupakshananda 1994: *TS* 1.9, p. 35). However, while the Naiyāyikas accept non-existence due to destruction to be indestructible, the Vedāntins term it destructible, as for them, with the destruction of the substratum of destruction, (e.g. the pieces of a jar), non-existence due to destruction is also destroyed. The knowledge of *brahman*, the substratum of all imaginary creations, destroys all imaginary creations imposed on it. As the destruction of an imaginary thing is deemed to be the same as its substratum, this destruction (as non-existence) is also not eternal (See Mādhavānanda 1997: *VP* 6, pp. 137-8).

Thus, the self, being associated with existence (*sattā*) in all three times (*kālatraya*), is eternal (*nitya*), and also distinct from the body, which is impermanent (*anitya*).⁴⁷⁴

Śaṃkara, living as he did before the Navya-nyāya evolved, does not employ heavily technical logical terminology, but he makes his non-dualist stance clear when he says that *BhG* 2.12 means that in spite of the destruction of the body, the individual self exists in all three times, since the self is eternal in nature. The term ‘we’ in the verse stands for the multiplicity of the bodies, not for the multiplicity of selves.⁴⁷⁵ With the support of various Śruti texts, Śaṃkara points out the eternal nature of the individual self in his commentary on the *BS* in a more explicit manner. In his opinion, it is to be understood that the individual self (*jīva*) is eternal, birthless, and changeless; it is the unchanging *brahman* itself appearing as the individual self, therefore, the individual self is none but *brahman*. It is only the supreme *brahman* itself, which in spite of being unchangeable, appears as the individual-self, by becoming associated with limiting adjuncts.⁴⁷⁶ Thus, by denying multiple selves and affirming it only of the bodies in the above *BhG* verse, Śaṃkara denies the theory of the Sāṃkhyas that the individual selves are many in number (*bahu-puruṣa-vāda*).⁴⁷⁷

The *BhG* repeatedly asserts the indestructible character (*avināśitva*) of the individual self as compared to the destructible character (*vināśitva*) of the physical body. Therefore, while explaining the text of *BhG* 2.16 in terms of distinguishing the real (*sat*) [i.e. self or *brahman*] from the unreal (*asat*) [i.e. the whole creation consisting of duality (*dvaitaprapaṇca*) that is superimposed on the former] MS says

⁴⁷⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 47.

⁴⁷⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, p. 47.

⁴⁷⁶ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 2.3.17-18, pp. 602, 604 (Also see Swaminathan 2005: p. 17-8).

⁴⁷⁷ See Vāsudevānanda 2006: p. 80.

that the unreal, which is delimited (*paricchinna*) by time (*kāla*), space (*deśa*) and other objects of experience (*vastu*),⁴⁷⁸ has no being (*bhāva*) or absolute reality (*pāramārthikatva*) that belongs only to what is free from the three limitations of unreal, and is not also limited by what has the reality not less (*anyūna*) than itself (*svānyūna-sattāka-tādṛśa-pariccheda-śūnya*).⁴⁷⁹ In his opinion, a pot (*ghaṭa*) is an example of something unreal, since it is subject to origination and destruction, as it is a counter-correlative (*pratiyogin*) of its prior non-existence (*prāgabhāva*) and annihilative non-existence (*pradhvāṃsābhāva*), as it does not exist before its production and after its destruction. Thus it is delimited by time and space. MS here refers the reader to his *AdS* for a more detailed discussion.⁴⁸⁰

Though MS, like Śaṅkara, has thus tried to establish the nature of ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ in order to show the reality of the self with neo-logical argumentation,

⁴⁷⁸ By ‘objective limitation’ (*vastu-pariccheda*) MS means the three kinds of difference (*bheda*), i.e. homogeneous difference (*sajātīya-bheda*) like a tree is different from another tree, heterogeneous difference (*vijātīya-bheda*) like a tree is different from a stone, and internal difference (*svagata-bheda*) like a tree is different from its leaves, flowers etc. By ‘objective limitation’ MS also means the dualistic Vedānta (Dvaita Vedānta) view that difference is fivefold, i.e. the difference between God and individuals, between individuals and the world, between different individuals, between God and the world and between the world and world in its various forms (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 54).

That the self or *brahman* is bereft of *svajātīya*, *vijātīya*, and *svagata bheda*-s is also mentioned by Vidyārāṇya in his *PD* (*Pañcadaśī* 2008: *PD* 2.20-21, p. 38).

⁴⁷⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 54.

Brahman, the absolute reality, is devoid (*śūnya*) of limitations of time, space and objects, as the reality of these three limitations is not equal to or greater, but surely lesser, than that of *brahman*, i.e. the absolute reality possesses not less reality than that of the empirical world. All these limitations, having lesser reality than *brahman* and being superimpositions on the latter, do not affect its (i.e. *brahman*’s) absolute reality, and are subsequently sublated by its knowledge. Thus, according to MS, that which is limited by time, space and other objects of experience is transitory (*vyabhicārī*), and that which is present somewhere in sometime and remains absent elsewhere in another time is unreal (*asat*). So, all worldly objects are unreal. On the other hand, that which is present in all time and in all places, i.e. the supreme reality, *brahman*, is the real. In this way, it is established that reality (*vastu*) is *brahman* which is without a second (*advaya*) and is existence, consciousness and bliss (*saccidānanda*); and by unreality (*avastu*) one should understand nescience and all other insentient beings (*ajñānādisakala-jaḍa-samūha*) [See Gambhirananda 2000a: Footnote 2, pp. 97-8 and Nikhilananda 1997: *VS* 2. 33, p. 20].

⁴⁸⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 54 and 59.

Dhanapati Sūri has termed MS's explanation erroneous.⁴⁸¹ He holds that in this interpretation, the sentence 'There is no becoming of what did not already exist, there is no unbecoming of what does exist...' (*BhG* 2.16) has been virtually reduced to two inferences, in each of which the probans (*hetu*, the middle term in a syllogism on the basis of which something is inferred) and the probandum (*sādhya*, the major term in a syllogism or that which is to be proved in the syllogism) have become virtually identical, which is a logical defect in the eyes of all logicians. Dhanapati holds that MS's explanation could be admitted if it is corrected in accordance with the view of Śaṅkara, but does not propose how it could be amended in this fashion.

Veṅkaṭanātha finds further faults with the explanation of MS on this verse, i.e. *BhG* 2.16. MS holds that the word *asat* is applicable to things having three types of limitation, i.e. the limitation of space, time, and matter (*deśa-kāla-vastu-pariccheda*). Veṅkaṭanātha points out that though worldly objects like pot etc. are also characterised by the three types of limitation, they are not said to be *asat*.⁴⁸² He also maintains that the term that the Advaitins use in describing things like pots etc. is *mithyā*. Thus, the interpretation offered by MS in this context is not strictly in accordance with the philosophical usage of the Advaita Vedāntins.⁴⁸³

Further, in the context of *BhG* 2.17, MS says that what is delimited by time, space and objects (*deśa-kāla-vastu-paricchinna*) is perishable (*vināśī*); and the opposite, i.e. that which is devoid of spatial, temporal and objective limitations

⁴⁸¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, p. 56.

⁴⁸² The term *asat* is applicable to what is totally fictional, e.g. a sky-flower, which can never be an object of our experience. Thus, even illusory objects, which are subject to sublation, are not called *asat*, but something that is neither *sat* nor *asat*. While *asat* means non-existent, *mithyā* means mistaken cognition.

⁴⁸³ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: *Brahmānandagiri*, p. 107.

(*deśa-kāla-vastu-pariccheda-śūnya*) is imperishable (*avināśī*). MS further adds that the self, being free from all limitations, is imperishable; and it acts as the substratum of the sense world, which in itself is devoid of reality and self-effulgence (*sattā-sphūrṭi-śūnya*). Just as an illusory snake (*sarpa*) or a streak of water (*dhārā*) appear on a rope (*rajju*) that acts as the substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the illusory snake etc., the imperishable self that is by nature one (*eka*), all-pervasive (*vibhu*) and eternal self-effulgence (*nitya-sadrūpa-sphuraṇa*) acts as the substratum of the world (which is bereft of reality and self-effulgence), which accounts for the fact that the world is experienced by us as something that exists and is also revealed.⁴⁸⁴ While explaining *BhG* 2.18, where destructible bodies are spoken of as belonging to the eternal, imperishable, and incomprehensible embodied self (*dehāśrita ātmā*), MS reiterates the Vedāntic view that the self (*śarīrī*), the conscious reality (*sphuraṇa-rūpa-sat*), is indestructible (and one), while the bodies (*śarīra*) that are destructible are superimposed (*adhyasta*) on the self due to ignorance. He reiterates that here, by the use of the plural number in the context of ‘body’, are meant all bodies, cosmic (*samaṣṭi*), including the gross cosmic body (*virāṭ*), subtle cosmic body (*hiranyagarbha* or *sūtra*), and unmanifest (*avyākṛta*) and individual (*vyakṛta*), in the form of gross (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), and causal (*kāraṇa*) bodies. In order to substantiate his view, MS quotes the Śruti text ‘the torso (*ātman*) is bliss; and the bottom on which it rests is the *brahman*’ (*TU* 2.5), and holds that *brahman* is the substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of all five sheaths (*pañca-koṣa*) of individual bodies, i.e. physical (*annamaya*), vital (*prāṇamaya*), mental

⁴⁸⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 60.

Just as a snake or a streak of water which does not have reality and effulgence on its own and appears to be a self-effulgent reality after being superimposed on a rope as its ground, this world of existence lacking its own reality and self-effulgence appears to be real after being superimposed on the self, i.e. the real, consciousness.

(*manomaya*), conscious (*vijñānamaya*), and blissful (*ānandamaya*). The point is that these sheaths are illusory, but their ground or substratum, i.e. *brahman* is real.⁴⁸⁵

Following Śaṅkara, MS explicates the self-effulgent nature of the self. MS explains that, though the self by nature is self-effulgent consciousness (*svaprakāśa-jñāna-svarūpa*), it is called the witnessing-self (*sākṣī*) when conditioned by nescience (*avidyopahita*), and is said to be the knower or cognisor (*pramātā* or *pramātr-caitanya*) when associated with the mind with its modifications (*vṛtti-mad-antaḥkaraṇopahita*).⁴⁸⁶ Baccā Jhā in this context mentions the Vedāntic theory that the witnessing self is one (*ekasākṣi-vāda*); according to this view, though the witnessing self, due to the multiplicity of the mind, gives rise to the multiplicity of the individual witnessing self (*jīva-sākṣī*), it is one in the case of God (*īśvara-sākṣī*).⁴⁸⁷ MS also shows the distinction (*viveka*) between the witnessing self and the knower. The knower, through the external organs like eyes etc. that are employed as instruments (*karaṇa*), coupled with the modifications of the mind, illuminates the external objects like pot etc., because the consciousness of *brahman* is reflected in the various modifications of the mind that is transparent (*svaccha*), and that assumes the forms of these objects. The same illuminating consciousness (*bhāsaka-caitanya*) becomes a knower while depending on the mental modifications in order to perceive an external object, and a witnessing self while not depending on the mental modifications in order to perceive the mind and its modifications like happiness, sorrow etc. MS mentions here that he has explained this point elaborately in his *AdS* and *SB*.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 62.

⁴⁸⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 63-4.

⁴⁸⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ*, p. 17.

⁴⁸⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 64.

The eternality of the self, as stated in the *BhG*, is established by yet another argument in the *GD*. The self is eternal, being bereft of the alternatives of having a beginning (*ādi* or *pūrva*) and an end (*anta* or *uttara*), and is not something that can be produced (*anutpādyā*). It cannot also be ephemeral like space and time. MS quotes the *BS* to show the Vedāntic view that unlike space and time, which are delimited by earth, and hence, are produced, the self, being devoid of origination and of any limitations, is not non-eternal. This has been explained in the aphorism ‘But (space is a product), for separateness persists wherever there is an effect, as it is seen in the world’ (*BS* 2.3.7).⁴⁸⁹ Śaṅkara also explains this *BS* text with the support of various Śruti texts that declare space to be a product of *brahman*.⁴⁹⁰

As regards the immutability of the self, MS says that any action consists in being associated with any one of the possible outcomes of action (*kriyā*), viz. production (*utpatti*), acquisition (*āpti*), transformation (*vikṛti*) and change of condition (*saṃskṛti*). The self, being ever in the same state, is immutable (*sanātana*) and cannot be the locus of any of these results of action.⁴⁹¹ In the same vein, Śaṅkara says in the introduction to his commentary on the *Īśopaniṣad* (*ĪU*) that the self in its true nature, being eternal, pure, one, bodiless, all-pervasive etc., cannot have any genuine association with *karma* (action or rituals) since it is not produced, transformed or attained; and is not also a doer or an enjoyer.⁴⁹²

While explaining the text, ‘I have known many past births, and so have you, Arjuna. I remember them all, while you do not, enemy-burner’ (*BhG* 4.5), MS states the Vedāntic views regarding the nature of the individual self. The phrase

⁴⁸⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 78.

⁴⁹⁰ Also see *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 2.3.7, pp. 584-6 for a detailed elucidation on it, and Gambhirananda 2000a: Footnote 1, p. 113 in order to understand the cryptic idea expressed here.

⁴⁹¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 78-9.

⁴⁹² *Śrīśaṅkarāgranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, *ĪUB*, pp. 5-6 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 843-4).

‘and yours’ (*tava ca*) in this verse, he holds, suggests that either there are other individual selves (*aneka-jīva*) or there is but a sole individual self (*eka-jīva*).⁴⁹³ By addressing Arjuna as ‘Arjuna’ in the verse, which is the name of a tree as well, Kṛṣṇa implies that Arjuna’s power of understanding, like a tree that is covered by its bark, remains covered by ignorance. The expression ‘enemy burner’ (*paraṃtapa*) implies that Arjuna, who is subject to the illusory awareness of difference (*bheda-dṛṣṭi*), is set to kill others whom he wrongly considers to be his foes. Thus, these two words of address to Arjuna convey two aspects of nescience, i.e. covering (*āvaraṇa*) and projecting (*vikṣepa*).⁴⁹⁴ MS holds that while Arjuna, being an ignorant individual whose power of intellect is imperfect due to obstruction, does not know even his own births; the omniscient and omnipotent God knows them all (i.e. births of his own as well as those of Arjuna and of others).⁴⁹⁵ Baccā Jhā adds that addressing Arjuna as ‘Arjuna’ indicates the covering power (*āvaraṇa-śakti*) of nescience, while the word *paraṃtapa* indicates his tendency to kill enemies etc., which is not possible without the power of projection (*vikṣepa-śakti*) possessed by nescience, which accounts for its being followed by action.⁴⁹⁶

Śaṃkara also remarks in this connection that Arjuna, with his cognitive power (*jñāna-śakti*) obscured by impressions of his past good (*dharma*) and bad actions (*adharma*), does not know his past births, but the omniscient and

⁴⁹³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 186.

This theory, known as *eka-jīvavāda* within Advaita, holds that there is but one individual-self and one material body. Individual self is both the material and efficient cause of the world. Individual self is one because the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) of it is the collective nescience (*samaṣṭi ajñāna*), not the individual effect (*vyaṣṭi kārya*) of nescience like the internal organ (*antahkarana*) etc. (Also see Gupta 2006: pp. 87-98ff. for MS’s treatment on the subject in his *AdS*, *SB* etc.; Mādhavānanda 1997: *VP* 7, pp. 178-83 ff., Grimes 2009: p. 157 to have a general idea of this problem).

⁴⁹⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 186 (Also see chapter 3.1.5 supra for elaborate discussion of the dual power of *māyā*).

⁴⁹⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 186.

⁴⁹⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ*, p. 95.

omnipotent God, being eternally pure, intelligent, free (*nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta*) and endowed with unobscured cognitive power (*anāvaraṇa-jñāna-śakti*), knows them all.⁴⁹⁷ Thus, for both MS and Śaṅkara, the distinction between the individual self and the supreme Lord lies in terms of their respective capacity for understanding and power. Such a distinction between the individual self and the supreme Lord is explained in terms of the distinction between their limiting adjuncts, which do not affect the nature of the ultimate reality, which is pure consciousness (*śuddha-caitanya*), one, without a second, eternal and immutable.

In short, MS's position can be summarized as one where the individual self (*jīva*), delimited by individual limiting adjuncts (*vyāṣṭi upādhi*) such as the internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*), cannot have omniscience (*sarvajñatva*), whereas God (*īśvara*), possessing illusion (*māyā*) [i.e. the ultimate cause of everything, subtle and gross alike] as his limiting adjunct, is endowed with the knowledge of past, present and future entities and events, and therefore is omniscient. Here, the following objection has been anticipated and answered.

The eternal God, being bereft of merit and demerit of past actions, cannot have birth. But *BhG* 4.5 says that both the Lord and individual self have several births, which is clearly inadmissible.⁴⁹⁸ While explaining the verse 'Although indeed I am unborn and imperishable, although I am the lord of the creatures, I do resort to nature, which is mine, and take on birth by my own wizardry' (*BhG* 4.6), Śaṅkara and MS both reply to this objection as follows. Although the Lord is the unborn (*janma-rahita*) and immutable self (*avyayātmā*), who is the possessor of undiminishing power of knowledge (*akṣīṇa-jñāna-śakti*) and the master of all

⁴⁹⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 186.

⁴⁹⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 186.

creatures from Brahmā down to a bunch of grass, he only appears to be endowed with a body, but does not possess one in the real sense. This is by virtue of his power of becoming (*māyā*), i.e. *prakṛti*, that consists of three constituents; viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and belongs to him as Viṣṇu. It is on account of this that one is deluded and does not know that one's very self is none but Vāsudeva. MS reiterates Śaṅkara's view in this connection.⁴⁹⁹

4.2.2. The relation of the individual self to the supreme self

Having thus mentioned the ontological status of *brahman* and *jīva*, a brief note pertaining to their relation may be relevant in order to see what the *BhG* has to say about it, and how the Advaitic commentators interpret it. The *BhG* apparently talks about *jīva* (represented by Arjuna, the seeker after enlightenment and a dedicated pupil) and *brahman* (represented by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the goal of enlightenment and the teacher) as two *distinct* entities. Yet the Advaitins hold them to be non-different, by either saying that the former is essentially the same as the latter (since the former is nothing but the latter as conditioned by the limiting adjuncts in the form of body and internal-organ (*antahkaraṇa*) produced by nescience) or by saying that the former is nothing but the reflection of the latter in the internal organs etc.⁵⁰⁰ Both of these views are found in *BS* 2.3.43-51. Śaṅkara himself, with the support of the Upaniṣadic texts, claims in his *BSB* that the individual self is eternal, unborn, unchangeable, and that it is non-different from the unchanging *brahman*. It is nothing but the unchanging supreme *brahman*, which, being associated with

⁴⁹⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 186-9 and *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* on *BhG* 4.6, p. 186 ff.

⁵⁰⁰ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 214-5.

limiting adjuncts, appears to exist as an individual self.⁵⁰¹ A few examples from the *BhG* verses will suffice to substantiate the point under discussion.

In *BhG* 15.7, the Lord says that the individual selves are his integral parts: ‘A particle of myself, as the eternal individual soul in the order of souls.’ While explaining this verse, MS states the objection of the opponents against the statement in a previous verse, ‘on reaching which they do not return’ (*BhG* 15.6) and answers it. Against the objection that every action of going has the act of coming back (*nivartana*) at the end, so that reaching the state of Viṣṇu must also be followed by the act of returning back to this world, MS says that the goer, i.e. the individual self (*jīva*), and the destination (*gantavya*), i.e. *brahman*, are non-different (*abhinna*). The use of the term ‘reaching’ in this verse is figurative (*aupacārika*), so there is no logical necessity of a return. Since *brahman* becomes mediate (*vyavahita*) [from the individual self] due to nescience (*ajñāna*) and the individual self identifies itself with *brahman* at the dawn of knowledge, describing this knowledge as ‘the attainment of *brahman*’ (*brahma-prāpti*) is purely figurative (*vyapadeśa*).⁵⁰²

In support of his view, MS now puts forward in the *GD* the different Vedāntic theories regarding the relation between the individual self and the supreme self. He holds that the *jīva* may be regarded as the reflection (*pratibimba*) of *brahman*. Just as the sun reflected in water (*jala-pratibimbata-sūrya*) merges with the sun itself on removal of the water and does not return to water, similarly, on account of *upādhi*, the *jīva* appears to be different from *brahman*, and, on cessation of *upādhi*, it does not return to its former stage. Alternatively, the *jīva* may be conceived of as a part of *brahman*. Like the space confined in a pot (*ghaṭākāśa*),

⁵⁰¹ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: BSB 2.3.17-18, pp. 602-4.

⁵⁰² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 618-9.

which merges with the cosmic space (*mahākāśa*) on the destruction of the pot, upon the removal of the limiting factor of the intellect (*buddhyavachinna*), the formerly limited *jīva* does not return to its previous state. The individual self, when identified with its unconditioned essential nature (*nirupādhi-svarūpa*, i.e. *brahman*), on removal of the individual self's limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*), realizes identity with *brahman*, and does not return any more to its former state.⁵⁰³ In the same vein, in the *SB* as well, following Sureśvara, Sarvajñātman, Prakāśtman and Vācaspati Miśra, MS discusses elaborately the different Vedāntic theories concerning the relation between *jīva* and *brahman*.⁵⁰⁴ Also, in the *AdS*, quoting the Śruti text, 'One quarter of him are all creatures, three quarters the immortal in heaven' (*CU* 3.12.6) and *BhG* 15.7, which affirm *brahman* as having *jīva* as a part of *brahman*, MS holds that these authoritative texts prove the basic identity of *brahman* and *jīva*. He maintains that *jīva* cannot be a part of *brahman* in the sense of a limited portion, for *brahman* is beginningless and partless. Since there cannot be any genuine part in *brahman* (*niṣpradeśa-brahma*), MS asserts that the so-called different parts of *brahman* must be admitted to be based on imaginary distinctions.⁵⁰⁵

Śaṅkara faces an objection that the partless (*niravayava*) supreme self cannot have any component part (*avayava*), and if it has component parts, then it is likely to be destroyed once those parts get disintegrated, and responds by pointing out that the so-called portions of *brahman* delimited by the limiting adjuncts of nescience are admitted as merely imaginary entities. He adds that this view has been explained in detail in the chapter on *kṣetra* (*BhG* 13.2).⁵⁰⁶ MS too replies to the

⁵⁰³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 619.

⁵⁰⁴ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 42-50 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 1012-14).

⁵⁰⁵ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 846 (Also refer to Gupta 2006: p. 80 ff.).

⁵⁰⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 619-20.

same objections by saying that, though the supreme self is essentially partless, it is imagined through nescience in the world [i.e. domain of embodied beings (*jīva-loka*)] as something that has parts due to reflection, delimitation etc.⁵⁰⁷

As has been noted before, the Lord has categorically asserted that the sentient beings (*jīva*-s) belong to his superior primordial nature (*parā-prakṛti*), as contrasted to his inferior primordial nature (*aparā-prakṛti*) consisting of insentient beings (*jaḍa*). The Lord also says he is the creator and destroyer of the entire universe made of these two *prakṛti*-s (*BhG* 7.4-6). Regarding the *parā-prakṛti* of the Lord which takes the form of the individual selves (*jīva-bhūta*), MS holds, in consonance with Śaṃkara, that it is (i) conscious by nature (*cetanātmikā*), (ii) characterised as the knower of the field (*kṣetrajña*), (iii) entirely pure (*viśuddha*) and (iv) identified with the Lord (*mamātmābhūta*), who upholds together this entire material world. In support of his view, MS quotes the Śruti text, ‘I establish the distinctions of name and appearance by entering these three deities with this living self’ (*CU* 6.3.2). The world cannot be held together without the presence of the conscious self.⁵⁰⁸ Śaṃkara’s explanation of the Śruti text lends support to MS, as Śaṃkara says that the deity here stands for the absolute (*sat*), which is the origin of fire, water and food, which manifests itself in distinct names and forms through the individual self, which in turn is of the nature of consciousness, non-different from the supreme self.⁵⁰⁹

In another context, the Lord says, ‘The lord of all creatures is inside their hearts and with his wizardry he revolves all the creatures as if mounted on a water

⁵⁰⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 619.

⁵⁰⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 346-7.

⁵⁰⁹ *Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 9, *CUB* 6.3.2, pp. 353-5 (Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. IV, *CUB* 6.3.2, pp. 584-8).

wheel’ (*BhG* 18.61). As explained before, this verse apparently suggests that the Lord resides in the hearts of all beings (*sarveṣāṃ prāṇinām*), and thus affirms the immanence of the supreme self in the individual self, thereby indicating some sort of difference between them.⁵¹⁰ The explicit mention of identity between the individual self and the supreme self is, however, found in the Lord’s own assertion in chapter 13 (i.e. *Kṣetra-kṣetrajña-vibhāga-yoga*) of the *BhG*; ‘Know, Bhārata, that I too am such a guide, but to all the fields; this knowledge of guide and field I deem knowledge indeed’ (*BhG* 13.2). Though by *kṣetra* is meant the physical body (*śarīra*), *kṣetrajña* means the knower of the physical body in *BhG* 13.1, and the fuller implication of these two terms is brought out in MS’s explanation of *BhG* 13.2, which conveys the identity between the individual self viewed as *kṣetrajña*; residing in the body, and the supreme self, denoted by the word *mām*, that has been employed in *BhG* 13.2.

According to MS, this verse expresses the view that the knower of the field is by nature self-effulgent, consciousness, eternal and all-pervasive, on whom the empirical ideas of agentship (*kartr̥tva*), enjoyership (*bhoktr̥tva*) etc. are superimposed through nescience. It is to be known as ultimately non-different from the Lord, who is by nature transcendental (*asaṃsārī*) and non-dual *brahman* in the form of bliss (*advitīya-brahmānanda-rūpa*).⁵¹¹ Thus, the field is something illusory or unreal that is imagined through nescience, and the knower of the field is the absolute truth (*paramārtha-satya*), which is the substratum of that illusory idea. This fact is really the knowledge of reality, which leads to liberation; and it is of the nature of revelation (*prakāśa*), which is opposed to nescience. MS says here that the

⁵¹⁰ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 215.

⁵¹¹ Thus, the empirical conditioned individual self and the Lord in the nature of pure consciousness and bliss are in fact identical with each other (See Brahma 1986: p. 888).

‘commentator’ (i.e. Śaṅkara) has discussed in detail the position that a difference between the individual self and God, which is felt from an empirical point of view, is imagined due to nescience, the individual self and God being identical from the ultimate point of view.⁵¹²

It is to be noted that Śaṅkara has established with elaborate arguments based on scriptural passages and the doctrine of *avidyā* the view that the supreme self, though undifferentiated, gets diversified into many *kṣetrājñā*-s because of the limiting adjuncts in the form of various *kṣetra*-s or bodies and *antaḥkaraṇa*-s (i.e. the internal organs) that are the products of nescience. Once the limiting adjuncts are sublated or removed, the *kṣetrājñā*-s or *jīva*-s become identified (i.e. non-different) from the non-dual supreme self.⁵¹³ Śrīdhara maintains that, though the *kṣetrājñā* during its transmigratory nature is considered as *jīva*, in reality, only the supreme lord, who is all-pervading, is present in all bodies (*kṣetra*-s) as *kṣetrājñā*, since the nature of the supreme lord is the same as that referred to as the conscious part (*cidaṃśa*) which is indicated by the Upaniṣadic sentence ‘That thou art’.⁵¹⁴

Rāmānuja, however, holds that while the Lord is the self of the knower (*jīvātmā*) present in all bodies in the form of gods, men etc.; he is also to be admitted as the body (*kṣetra*) as well. Just as the body, being the distinguishing attribute (*viśeṣaṇa*) of its knower (i.e. the self), remains inseparable (*apṛthaksiddha*) from the latter on account of the principle of grammatical co-ordination (*sāmānādhikarāṇya*); so also both the body and its knower, being the distinguishing attributes (*viśeṣaṇa*) forming the body of the Lord, remain inseparable from the Lord, their inseparability being known by virtue of the terms expressing them being

⁵¹² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 525-31.

⁵¹³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 523ff. (Also see Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 135).

⁵¹⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīdharīvyākhyā*, pp. 524-5.

grammatically co-ordinated. It is attested in the text (*BhG* 15.16-18) that the supreme *brahman*, Vāsudeva, is different from the body and its knower, who (i.e. its knower) is both bound (*baddha*) and free (*mukta*), and is also denoted by the words *kṣara* and *akṣara*.⁵¹⁵

Thus, we find that the verse in question regarding the relation of the knower of the field to the supreme-self has been explained by MS, in unanimity with Śaṅkara and Śrīdhara, and in direct opposition to Rāmānuja. While the former three commentators, admitting the doctrine of *avidyā*, claim that it expresses the identity of the individual self and the supreme reality *brahman*; Rāmānuja thinks that it expresses the design of immanence of the supreme self in all sentient beings and the cosmic matter as the indwelling self (*pratyagātmā*), thereby having an organic relation with them (i.e. sentient beings and the cosmic matter).⁵¹⁶ It may be noted that *BS* 2.3.43 which declares the *jīva*-s to be parts of *brahman*, seems to convey both the difference and non-difference between *jīva* and *brahman*; since a ‘part’ (*aṃśa*) is normally viewed as some sort of qualified substance (*viśiṣṭa dravya*), which is compatible with the view of Rāmānuja.⁵¹⁷ However, while explaining this aphorism, Śaṅkara reiterates his view that the individual is only *apparently* a part of God, as the partless *brahman* cannot have any part in the literal sense of this term, though he accepts that both the difference and non-difference between *jīva* and *brahman* are acknowledged in this text.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 3, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 19.

⁵¹⁶ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 135.

⁵¹⁷ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 216.

⁵¹⁸ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* 2.3.43, p. 622 (Besides, there are innumerable places in his commentary on the *BS* such as on *BS* 2.3.30, 2.3.40, 2.3.44-45, 2.3.50 etc. where Śaṅkara has dealt with the relation between the supreme-self and the individual-self in detail).

4.3. The universe (*jagat*)

Along with the two other entities, viz. *brahman* and *jīva*, the cosmos (*jagat*) also has a distinct role to play not only in the Vedānta but also in Indian philosophical discussion at large. We have seen earlier that the Lord univocally declares that he is the creator and destroyer of this cosmic universe, and that all beings have their origin in his two primordial natures, i.e. the insentient or lower (*aparā prakṛti*) and the sentient or superior (*parā prakṛti*) [*BhG* 7.4-6]. With this idea in view, let us discuss how the various commentators interpret how this important entity has been presented in the *BhG*.

4.3.1. The origin and ontological status of the universe

The *BhG* asserts in key places that the entire universe is created by the Lord, but elsewhere also says that the Lord does not in fact create anything. It is the creative power of nature (*prakṛti*) that gives rise involuntarily to the whole aggregate of beings, ‘Resting on my own nature, I create, again and again, this entire aggregate of creatures involuntarily by the force of nature’ (*BhG* 9.8). MS argues that the Lord does not create this world for his own enjoyment, as he is the pure consciousness in the form of cosmic witness. Otherwise, he would be an empirical entity, which would bar him from being God. He does not create this universe for anybody else, because there could be no other conscious entity but the Lord, who resides in every living being as the individual consciousness (*jīva*-s). Nor can the creation be for any insentient being, which can never be an enjoyer, and creation is supposed to facilitate the enjoyment of pleasure and pain. Nor can it be accepted that creation is meant for liberation, since there is in fact no real bondage, and since

creation is opposed to liberation.⁵¹⁹ MS holds further that just as the dreamer projects a dream-world (*svāpna-prapañca*), or a magician projects various creations; the Lord creates the world or the aggregate of elements through mere imagination. And thus, the view that the entire process of creation is nothing but a false appearance is held by MS in an unambiguous manner, when he says that the untenability (*anupapatti*) regarding the possibility of creation compels one to regard it as unreal. Hence, the thesis that the world is illusory does not run counter (*pratikūla*) to the Advaita Vedāntins.⁵²⁰ In this way, MS establishes his claim that the world that is supposed to be created can never have the status of *brahman*, which is the ever-existent reality.

In another context, the Lord asserts that *prakṛti*, which is described as the large *brahman* (*mahat brahma*) is his womb (*yonī*), where he plants the seed and from which all beings originate (*BhG* 14.3). MS explains that during the time of creation, the Lord, in order to bring the knower of the field (*kṣetrajña*, i.e. *jīva*) [which remains merged with the Lord at the time of dissolution] into contact with nescience, desire, the results of past actions, and with the field (*kṣetra*) [i.e. the object to be enjoyed as the body-organs complex], deposits the seed (*garbha*) in the form of modification of *māyā* by ejecting ‘semen’ that is otherwise called semblance of consciousness (*cidābhāsa*). It thus gives rise to the state of creation of space, air, fire, water, earth etc. MS continues that from this so-called insemination

⁵¹⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 417. With this, the view of the Sāṃkhyas is also refuted, which proclaims creation to be meant for the enjoyment of the *puruṣa* and for the attainment of emancipation (Also see Brahma 1986: p. 728).

⁵²⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 417-8.

(*garbhādhāna*) originate all beings from the *hiranyagarbha* downwards, though without this process of insemination initiated by the Lord, no creation takes place.⁵²¹

Śaṅkara and Śrīdhara too interpret this verse (*BhG* 14.3) in a similar manner.⁵²² The *BhG* does not mention clearly the process of evolution of the products of *prakṛti*, but merely enumerates its evolutes (in *BhG* 7.4. 13.5 etc.). MS has explained both the views of the Sāṃkhya and Vedānta in this regard with an assertion that the latter is the better one.⁵²³ Again, we find that *BhG* 14 describes in detail the nature of *prakṛti* as consisting of three *guṇa*-s (*triguṇātmikā*), i.e. *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The fact that *prakṛti* is the same as *māyā* of the Lord is asserted by the *BhG* throughout (*BhG* 4.6, 7.14, 18.61 etc.)⁵²⁴, which has also been interpreted in a non-dualistic manner by MS. In his *PB*, MS refers to the different theories of creation as held by various schools of Indian philosophy and asserts that both the non-dualist and dualist Vedāntins (i.e. the Vaiṣṇavas) agree with the view that the supreme Lord, the one without a second, is the creator of the world.⁵²⁵

With regard to the ontological status of the universe as set forth in the *BhG*, we may mention that, though the description of glories of the Lord in *BhG* 10 and elsewhere establishes the reality of the cosmos, it is held in *BhG* 7.7, 9.4 etc. that the subsistence of the cosmos depends on the supreme self or Lord. Further, in another important context, the Lord says in the *BhG* that the entire universe is pervaded by him in an unmanifest form, though he does not exist in it (*BhG* 9.4). MS has explained this verse in the following way. He holds that just as due to ignorance a rope is imagined as a snake or a line of water, and the existence and

⁵²¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 589.

⁵²² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchamkarabhāṣyam* and *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, pp. 588-9.

⁵²³ For details, see *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 344-6 and 541-2.

⁵²⁴ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 218-9.

⁵²⁵ *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* 1977: p. 10.

manifestation of the snake or line of water depend on that of the rope, similarly this world consisting of all visible elements and their effects are imagined through ignorance about the Lord, but are pervaded by the Lord, his supreme reality being the substratum of this world and accounting for the existence and manifestation of the latter. Against the doubt that Vāsudeva, the Lord, being a limited human being, cannot pervade the entire universe, as it is opposed to common experience, MS argues⁵²⁶ that, though all the mundane elements etc. and their products are pervaded by the unmanifest form of the Lord which transcends our senses and is of the form of self-effulgence, non-duality, consciousness and eternal bliss (*svaprakāśādvaya-caitanya-sadānanda-rūpa*), he does not at all subsist in these illusory elements, as there can be no genuine relation between the imagined (reality) and the non-imagined (illusory).⁵²⁷

In his *BhGB*, Śaṃkara declares clearly in this connection that the Lord is the inmost core even of space (*ākāśasya api antaratamaḥ*).⁵²⁸ In the same tune, as noted before, in his *BSB* too, Śaṃkara maintains that space also originates like fire etc. and that (in order to avoid contradicting the Upaniṣads) it is established that space is a product of *brahman*.⁵²⁹ Thus, the Upaniṣadic passages describing the origin of the world clearly imply that, though *brahman* is by nature bereft of any form by nature (*avyakta-svarūpa*), all entities, both sentient and insentient, nevertheless subsist in *brahman*, which is their self and inner-controller, though they are not aware of its

⁵²⁶ MS bases himself on Śaṃkara's explanation on the *BS*: '...whenever there is a superimposition of one thing on another, the locus is not affected by the merits and demerits of the thing superimposed' (*BSB*, introduction). See *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 40.

⁵²⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 413-4.

⁵²⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, p. 414.

⁵²⁹ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 2.3.6-7, pp. 582 and 588.

existence. In short, the universe does not exist apart from *brahman*, though *brahman* is not dependent on the universe for its existence.⁵³⁰

Thus, in an important verse in the *BhG*, the Lord asserts: ‘In water I am the taste, Kaunteya, in sun and moon the light, in all the Vedas the syllable OM, in space the sound’ (*BhG* 7.8), which equates the supreme-self with the cosmos. While the comments of Śaṅkara and MS in this regard equate *brahman* with the cosmic universe,⁵³¹ Śaṅkara’s explanation on the Upaniṣadic texts; ‘*Brahman*, you see, is this whole world...’ (*CU* 3.14.1) conveys that this cosmic universe, being in various names and forms and the object of perception etc., has *brahman* as its source. Śaṅkara further adds that, since the cosmic universe is the greatest of all, it is known as *brahman*.⁵³²

Having noted thus the nature of the supreme self and that of the cosmos according to the *BhG*, we may now ask whether these two ontological entities are stated to be related in the *BhG*, and if the answer is yes, then how? The clear-cut answer from the Advaitins would be that, though from the empirical point of view the universe exists, from the viewpoint of the supreme reality it has no independent existence; since it is non-different from *brahman*. The cosmos appears to be existent due to our ignorance of the sole reality, *brahman*, there being no other reality than *brahman*.

Accordingly, in his *AdRR* MS, vehemently refutes the dualist Naiyāyika view that the world is real, where in the introductory verses MS pays obeisance to *brahman*, who by its very nature is existence, consciousness, and bliss, and has

⁵³⁰ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 97 and 199.

⁵³¹ For details, refer to *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam* and *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 351-2.

⁵³² *Śrīśāṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 9, p. 173.

assumed the human form (of Lord Kṛṣṇa). He asserts that his aim in undertaking this venture is to establish the gem of non-duality by rebutting the dualist opponents who pose as logicians, but put forward defective arguments.⁵³³ As has been noted before, in order to establish the supreme non-dual reality, i.e. *brahman*, MS has given elaborate arguments in his *AdS* for showing the unreality of empirical objects.⁵³⁴ In the same vein, in his *AdRR*, MS, having quoted Śaṃkara, Sureśvara and Sarvajñātman, maintains that there cannot be any genuine association between *brahman* (*sat*), the only existent reality, and empirical existence (*anṛta* or *mithyā*), because, while the former is bereft of any association (*asaṅga*), one without second (*advitīya*), conscious (*cinmātra*), and transcendently real (*paramārtha satya*), the latter, like a dream, is imagination that is based on nescience.⁵³⁵ In accordance with the true import of non-dualism, MS asserts that, though both *brahman* and nescience are generally regarded as the material cause (*upādāna-kāraṇa*) of the universe, *brahman*, being unchangeable, is the non-evolving cause through false appearance (*vivarta*) due to nescience, while nescience is the evolving cause (*pariṇāmī kāraṇa*) of the universe. He thereby affirms that *brahman* is neither the material cause nor the efficient/instrumental cause of the universe in the proper senses of these terms.⁵³⁶ Further, in a more firm tone, MS asserts in his *SB* that from nescience, as associated with the reflection of pure consciousness, proceeds the empirical existence, of which God (*īśvara*)⁵³⁷ is the creator.⁵³⁸ In Śaṃkara's commentary on *BS* 2.3.13 it is attested that God, as the locus of the elements of

⁵³³ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: Introductory verses 1-2, p. 1.

⁵³⁴ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: *AdS* 1.3-8, pp. 48-232.

⁵³⁵ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 5 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 83).

⁵³⁶ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 757 ff. (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 102 ff.).

⁵³⁷ *īśvara* itself, according to Advaita, is conditioned by nescience.

⁵³⁸ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 89 ff. (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 102 ff.).

space etc., creates the products of these elements.⁵³⁹ All these statements are in agreement with Śaṃkara's unambiguous assertion in *BSB* 3.2.32 that, due to the fact that when *brahman* is known everything else is known, the independent existence of anything else other than *brahman* cannot be thought of.⁵⁴⁰

Having thus noted above in brief the nature of the three important entities discussed in the Vedānta philosophy, i.e. *brahman*, *jīva*, and *jagat*, which are also the cornerstones of the philosophic teaching of the *BhG*, as admitted by Śaṃkara and MS, and as reflected in their works and those of other commentators of the *BhG*, we may assert firmly that in performing the task of establishing the non-dual Vedāntic stance, MS is on a par with Śaṃkara.

⁵³⁹ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 595 (Also see Nair 1990: p. 85).

⁵⁴⁰ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 725 (Also see Śaṃkara's comments on *BS* 2.3.5, pp. 580-1 in the same edition).

Liberation (*mokṣa*) and the Means (*sādhana*) of Attaining It

In the two preceding chapters, we have discussed at some length the summary of the *BhG* as presented by MS in his introduction to the *GD*, and the three principal Vedāntic metaphysical realities, i.e. *brahman*, *jīva*, and *jagat*. As the final goal of any *śāstra* is to ensure its followers liberation or emancipation (*mokṣa/mukti*) from suffering, the *BhG* too holds liberation to be its ultimate goal. In the present chapter, the nature of liberation as held by the Advaita Vedānta and the process of attaining it will be discussed.

At the outset, the following observation of Sanjukta Gupta about the concept of liberation admitted in the Advaita Vedānta in general and by MS in particular may be pertinent:

In Advaita-vedānta, liberation is not the resultant state that *jīva* should attain. According to this school, liberation (*mukti/mokṣa*) is an ever-accomplished fact; it is nothing but Brahman itself. It is the revelation of absolute bliss. Absolute cessation of misery, which precedes liberation, implies the blissfulness of liberation, and *jīva* aspires to achieve it for that bliss. Vedāntic *mokṣa* is thus not mere cessation of misery. It is absolute bliss. Madhusūdana maintains that liberation is in fact identical with one's own real self, *ātman*, which is integral, all-blissful, non-dual consciousness. It is pure and non-dual consciousness.⁵⁴¹

In consonance with Gupta's observation mentioned above, the present chapter of the thesis is devoted to the explication of the concept of liberation and the means of attaining it, as propounded by the *BhG* and as explained by MS in his *GD*.

⁵⁴¹ Gupta 2006: p. 114.

5.1. The nature of liberation as upheld by *Bhagavadgītā* and *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

At the outset, it may be mentioned that for Śaṅkara, ‘Liberation is the state of identity with *brahman* [by the individual self]’ (*‘brahmabhāvaśca mokṣaḥ’*, *BSB* on *BS* 1.1.4).⁵⁴² The *BhG* states that liberation is the supreme goal of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*), but it does not give the details of its nature. This idea is envisaged there in different contexts. In some verses (*BhG* 4.31, 5.24, 8.24, 13.30, 18.50 etc.), it is described as reaching *brahman*; or in some verses (*BhG* 4.9; 7.23; 8.7, 15, 16; 9.25, 28, 34; 10.10; 11.55; 12.4; 18.55, 65, 68 etc.) as reaching Lord Kṛṣṇa, that is, being fit to become *brahman* or being fit to become non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa. The *BhG* describes various means for attaining this liberation (i) through knowledge (*BhG* 4.9 etc.), (ii) through action (*BhG* 5.2-6 etc.), (iii) through a combination of knowledge and renunciation of action (*BhG* 9.28, 12.12 etc.), (iv) through devotion (*BhG* 8.22 etc.), or (v) through the grace of the Lord (*BhG* 18.56, 62 etc.).⁵⁴³

As regards the nature of liberation, the *BhG* describes it as a state beyond death, a release from the sickness and suppression of birth, a dwelling from where no one comes back. It is the supreme end, a state of the greatest accomplishment. That a *jñānin* or a *bhakta* is viewed as equally capable of reaching this state according to the *BhG* is clear from its various verses. While it asserts that it is only through devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa that he can be reached (*BhG* 11.54, 18.55 etc.), it is also uttered by the Lord himself that the *jñānin* is his own self (*BhG* 7.18 etc.). Again, in one context, it is said that the devotee, having attained identity with the

⁵⁴² *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 128.

⁵⁴³ Cf. Mainkar 1969: p. 43.

Lord, goes beyond birth and death (*BhG* 14.2). Thus, the *BhG* unequivocally asserts that a *jñānin* or a *bhakta* becomes fit for liberation.⁵⁴⁴

In another context, the *BhG* holds liberation to be the supreme domain of the Lord, on reaching which there can be no return to any earlier stage (*BhG* 15.6 etc.). As to the practice of *jñāna-yoga*, it is said that the enlightened being, having been freed from the bondage of rebirth, reaches the state beyond any affliction (*BhG* 2.51 etc.). Further, it is said that on account of their sins being washed away by knowledge, the seekers of liberation attain the state of no return (*BhG* 5.17 etc.). Regarding the practice of *bhakti-yoga*, it is uttered by the Lord himself that on reaching him, the seeker attains the highest perfection and does not return to the state of rebirth, which is the impermanent abode of suffering (*BhG* 8.15 etc.). The Lord also says that, though all states, including the world of Lord Brahmā, are such that those who then have to be reborn, once the Lord is reached there is no question of rebirth (*BhG* 8.16 etc.). It is held that by the observance of *bhakti-yoga*, the seeker attains the Lord alone (*BhG* 18.65 etc.). Through devotion, the devotee knows the Lord in reality, and consequently, enters him forthwith (*BhG* 18.55 etc.). So, all these passages of the *BhG* show that the supreme goal to be reached is to attain the Lord, the supreme self, since the individual self, united with the supreme self, overcomes bondage.

Besides, there are a few statements in the *BhG* which imply that *jīva*, on being enlightened, reaches the status of *brahman*, i.e. merges with *brahman*. Such a state is known as *brahma-bhāva* or *brāhmī-sthiti* (*BhG* 2.72 etc.). The *BhG* also declares that one who is steadfast in knowledge (*sthita-prajña*) arrives at this state,

⁵⁴⁴ See Mainkar 1969: p. 43.

i.e. *brāhmī-sthiti* (*BhG* 2.54, 55 etc.). Attainment of the status of *brahman* or becoming *brahman* (*brahma-bhūyāya*) by the seeker is also indicated in *BhG* 5.24-26, 14.26, 18.53 etc.⁵⁴⁵ Together with the above-mentioned verses in the *BhG*; the verses 13.3, 12, 18; 14.19; 8.23-26; 13.12 etc. of the *BhG* may also be looked into in this connection.⁵⁴⁶

Having thus shown above the specific verses in the *BhG* where the idea of ‘liberation’ has been defined in its various nuances, let us discuss below in brief how MS explicates this idea in his *GD* in particular and in other works in general.

As explained before, MS mentions in the versified introduction to his *GD* that indicating the path for the attainment of the highest good or salvation is the purpose (*prayojana*) served by the *BhG śāstra*, and that this highest good is the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu, being of the nature of *sccidānanda*. We have also seen that MS has explained in the *GD* the various means of attaining this highest good (*param niḥśreyasa*) or the highest goal (*parama-purāṣārtha*) with an emphasis on the principal means of action, devotion, and knowledge, which are interwoven in the *BhG* itself together with other ways subsidiary to such principal means.

In connection with becoming fit for reaching *brahman* or Lord Kṛṣṇa being described as obtaining liberation, MS explains in *BhG* 4 that those who know and perform all the twelve sacrifices referred to in this chapter reach the eternal reality, *brahman*, i.e. they go beyond the cycle of birth and death or transmigration (*saṃsāra*) through the purification of the mind and attainment of knowledge.⁵⁴⁷ Śaṅkara had also held in this connection that the aspirants for liberation reach *brahman* in course of time, through different stages (*kramamukti*), i.e. after

⁵⁴⁵ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 257-9.

⁵⁴⁶ See Mainkar 1969: p. 43 ff.

⁵⁴⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* on *BhG* 4.31, pp. 228-9.

attaining knowledge that follows after the purification of the mind etc.⁵⁴⁸ While explaining the Lord's assertion (*BhG* 5.24) that a *yogin*, who is satisfied within, attains oneness with *brahman*, which is final emancipation (*nirvāṇa*), MS, following Śaṃkara, maintains that *brahman*, by virtue of its nature of supreme bliss, is itself the final emancipation, owing to its being the cessation of world-duality, which is imaginary (since the cessation of whatever is imaginary is the same as the substratum on which that thing is imagined). As that *brahman* is the substratum of false world-appearance, the *yogin* (as described before) attains the ever-attained (i.e. *brahman*) with the dissipation of the veil of ignorance that is the cause of world-appearance, while he (i.e. that *yogin*) is indeed eternally one with *brahman*. In support of this claim, MS quotes the Śruti text: 'Brahman he is, and to *brahman* he goes' (*BU* 4.4.6) and the *BS* text: 'Kāśakṛtsna thinks (the statement about the identity in the beginning of the text is in order) because of the existence of the supreme Self as the individual self' (*BS* 1.4.22). While explaining the above Śruti text, Śaṃkara says that the expression 'to become absorbed in *brahman*' is a figurative one, meant for one who holds a different view from that of the Upaniṣads, which convey the undifferentiated character of the self (as *jīva* by nature is *brahman* eternally).⁵⁴⁹ Śaṃkara's non-dualistic stand is also found in the explanation of the *BS* text cited above where he maintains, with the support of various Śruti and Smṛti texts, that this statement (of the teacher Kāśakṛtsna) of non-difference is right because of the subsistence of the very supreme self in the form of the individual self.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, on *BhG* 4.31, p. 229.

⁵⁴⁹ *Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 10, p. 623.

⁵⁵⁰ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: p. 416 ff.

In the same vein, while explaining *BhG* 5.26, MS asserts clearly that those who have direct realisation of the self are presented with *brahman* as final emancipation (*brahmanirvāṇa*) whether they are alive or dead, since liberation is eternal and cannot be sought for in future owing to its not being an object of aspiration or an end to be arrived at (*sādhya tvābhāva*).⁵⁵¹ Śrīdhara emphasises the point by saying that the liberated merge in *brahman* not only after death but also while they are alive.⁵⁵²

While explaining the contention of the Lord that the knowers of *brahman* attain *brahman* while departing from this world by the path of deities [i.e. the path of fire, flame, the day, the bright fortnight, and the six months of the sun's northern course (*BhG* 8.24)], MS, in agreement with Śaṅkara, maintains that meditation on the *saguṇa-brahman* helps the seeker reach gradually the *nirguṇa-brahman*. With the support of the *BS* text 'Bādari thinks that the souls are led to the conditioned Brahman, for it (alone) can reasonably be the goal' (*BS* 4.3.7), he holds that the worshippers of the conditioned or qualified *brahman*, by departing by the path of deities (*deva-yāna-mārga*), attain *brahman* having delimitation by effects functioning as limiting adjuncts, since unconditioned *brahman* is attained in gradually reached liberation (*karma-mokṣa*) that can be obtained through the realisation of the conditioned *brahman*.⁵⁵³

Śaṅkara's stance in this connection becomes explicit when he asserts, quoting *BU* 4.4.6, that there is neither going nor returning for those who are established in right knowledge (*samyag-darśana-niṣṭha*), as they are immediately

⁵⁵¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 276.

⁵⁵² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, p. 276.

⁵⁵³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 405.

liberated (*sadyo-mukti-bhājana*). The vital breaths of such aspirants merge in *brahman* alone, and they become *brahman* indeed.⁵⁵⁴ Again, Śaṅkara explains the above *BS* text cited by MS by saying that for the conditioned *brahman* (*kārya-brahman*), there is the destination to be reached, as it has a place. But in respect of supreme *brahman*, the question of goer, destination etc. does not arise, owing to its being all-pervading and the indwelling self of the goers.⁵⁵⁵

In another verse, the Lord says that when the seeker sees the diversities of created beings as being rooted in one *brahman* and as being emanated from that *brahman*, he becomes identified with *brahman* (*BhG* 13.30). MS, in line with Śaṅkara, states that this identification is attained by one who follows the instructions of the scriptures and the teachers, ponders over the fact that the separateness of all the material existence, whether movable or immovable, is imagined on the self which is existence by nature (*sadrūpa*). These imaginary objects are nothing but the self, because they are superimposed on the self and do not have any reality other than their substratum. He realizes that the manifestation or divergence of created beings is like a dream, arising from the non-dual self due to illusion. Due to the non-perception of the difference existing between two objects belonging to the same class (*sajātīya bheda*) and that of belonging to different classes (*vijātīya bheda*), he becomes *brahman* indeed, which is devoid of all evils. MS substantiates himself with the support of the Śruti text: ‘When in the self of a

⁵⁵⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 404-5.

⁵⁵⁵ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB on BS* 4.3.7, p. 994.

discerning man, his very self has become all beings, what bewilderment, what sorrow can there be, regarding that self of him who sees his oneness' (*ĪU* 7).⁵⁵⁶

While explaining the said Śruti text, Śaṃkara maintains in his inimitable manner that there cannot occur any delusion or sorrow for one to whom all beings have become the very self because of realising the reality of the supreme self (*paramārthātmadarśanādātmaivābhūt*). Sorrow and delusion occur to one who does not know the seed of various desires and their respective actions, but not to the one who has realised the oneness of the pure self. Śaṃkara also asserts that here (i.e. in the case of a perceiver of the self), by indicating the unfeasibility of sorrow and delusion (i.e. the effects of ignorance), the total annihilation of the empirical existence (*saṃsāra*) together with its cause (i.e. ignorance) has been shown.⁵⁵⁷ The idea embedded here, that sorrow and delusion are due to ignorance (*avidyā*), which is the root cause of *saṃsāra*, has been indicated in the beginning of Śaṃkara's *BhG* commentary as well. In order to explain the bewildered nature of Arjuna, Śaṃkara holds that the text starting from *BhG* 1.2 and ending with *BhG* 2.9 is meant to show the root cause of the defects in the form of sorrow and delusion, which shape the transmigratory life (*saṃsāra*) of all living creatures. He also maintains that the cessation of sorrow and delusion is possible only by the knowledge of the self, preceded by the renunciation of all actions, and not by any other means.⁵⁵⁸ Thus, in his commentaries on the Upaniṣad and on the *BhG*, Śaṃkara finds fitting circumstances to mention that effects of ignorance like grief and delusion, which

⁵⁵⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 580-1 (lower case 'w' used in 'what bewilderment' in stead of upper case 'W' in 'What bewilderment' in translation of *ĪU* 7).

⁵⁵⁷ *Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, p. 14.

⁵⁵⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 39-40.

characterise the beings subject to transmigration, are done away with the attainment of the true knowledge of the self.⁵⁵⁹

As indicated before, according to the *BhG*, obtaining liberation is also the same as reaching Lord Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa. In one such verse (*BhG* 4.9), the Lord asserts that one who knows his (i.e. Lord's) divine birth and actions in reality is not reborn after giving up his body, and attains him (i.e. the Lord). MS explains this verse by holding that the seeker reaches here Lord Vāsudeva, who is of the nature of the amalgamation of existence, knowledge, and bliss (*saccidānanda-ghana*), thereby becoming free from transmigration.⁵⁶⁰

Thus, bearing in mind the non-dualistic notion about liberation that it is ever accomplished and is the supreme reality *brahman* itself, as pointed out and revealed by the above discussion, a bit of additional discussion of it is continued below in order to explicate the nature of liberation as admitted by MS.

In his *AdS* too, in response to the objection that for the self, being bereft of any attachment to sensual objects (*nirviṣayatva*), there would be no revelation of bliss at the time of self-realisation (*mokṣa*), and that thus no one would identify this bliss with *mokṣa*, MS maintains that the revelation is itself bliss, and it is not the revelation of bliss.⁵⁶¹ Again, in his *AdRR*, MS says that liberation, being the ultimate end of human life (*carama-puruṣārtha*), implies the cessation of misery. At the time of liberation, though there is the impossibility of temporary happiness (*anitya-sukha*), there is the possibility of eternal happiness (*nitya-sukha*). MS further adds

⁵⁵⁹ See Panoli 2006: Footnote 1, p. 51.

⁵⁶⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 192.

⁵⁶¹ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 301-3.

that though the aspirants after liberation aim to achieve the cessation of misery in the popular sense (*laukika-duḥkhābhāva*), they desire for attaining the bliss of *brahman* (*brahmānanda*) that is entailed by the cessation of misery.⁵⁶² However, the most conspicuous discussion on liberation (*mokṣa*) is found in his *VKL*. In connection with establishing his own view on the nature of liberation and the means of attaining it, after refuting rival views, MS maintains that the followers of the Upaniṣads (*aupaniṣada-s*), graced by Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of the Blue-mountain (*nīlācala-nāyaka*), hold liberation to be precisely the same as the self, which is in the form of unsurpassed bliss and consciousness (*niratiśayānanda-bodha-rūpa*). It is further characterised by the cessation of beginningless nescience (*anādyavidyā-nivṛtṭyupalakṣita*). He also states that, though liberation does not need any means for its attainment, the idea of the means of its attainment is spoken of only metaphorically. Again, MS categorically asserts that liberation (or salvation) is indistinguishable from one's own self, which is said to be the cessation of nescience, and is also known as the mere complete bliss and non-dual consciousness and existence (*akhaṇḍānandādvitīya-caitanya-sanmātra*). Thus, he adds, here lies the zenith of all the ends of human life (*sarva-pumārtha-viśrānti*).⁵⁶³

Thus, the above note on the nature of liberation, as held by MS in his different works, substantiates the view that he remains faithful to the general non-dualistic stand while explaining the nature of this philosophical concept (i.e. liberation), besides showing his inclination towards the qualified supreme reality.

⁵⁶² *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 23.

⁵⁶³ Karmarkar 1962: pp. 10-11, 54 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 114 ff. for details).

5.2. Various means of liberation and their relative importance as held by

Śaṅkara and Madhusūdana in relation to the *Bhagavadgītā*

Having thus noted briefly in the preceding section as to how MS views the nature of liberation, we examine the means that he prescribes for its attainment to see whether, if at all, MS differs in this regard from his great predecessor Śaṅkara.

It may be pointed out again that, while mentioning the various steps of attaining liberation (*mukti-sādhana-parvan*) in the versified introduction to his *GD*, MS has emphatically stated that devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti*) plays an integral part in this process. We have also seen that MS has mentioned there that all the three paths of attaining liberation, viz. *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna* are upheld respectively in the *BhG* in accordance with its (i.e. *BhG*'s) subject-matter. It is to be noted that at the beginning of his *BhR*, MS, with the support of the *BP*, asserts emphatically that it is the well-known fact that there are four kinds of *yoga* as the means of attaining the end of human life, i.e. the *yoga* of action, eight-limbed-*yoga*, *yoga* of knowledge, and the *yoga* of devotion.

He also maintains that the eight-limbed *yoga* is to be included in the *yoga* of knowledge.⁵⁶⁴ While giving a sketch of the contents of each chapter of the *BhG*, at the beginning of his commentary on the third chapter of the *BhG*, MS holds that what has been introduced in the first chapter of the *BhG* as the entire meaning of it (*BhG*) has been aphoristically stated in its second chapter. There is, he holds, initially resoluteness in disinterested actions (*niṣkāma-karma-niṣṭhā*); then follows purification of the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*); from this takes place the renunciation of all actions (*sarva-karma-saṁnyāsa*) preceded by the fourfold aids to

⁵⁶⁴ Sāṅkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: MS's comments on *BhR* 1.1, p. 2.

liberation (*sādhana-catustaya*); then arises steadfastness in devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā*) coupled with the reflection (*vicāra*) on the Vedāntic sentences; from this follows steadfastness in the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna-niṣṭhā*); the result of which is embodied liberation (*jīvanmukti*) reached through the cessation of nescience, which continues until the fructification of accumulated past actions (*prārabdha-karma*); and after that, follows disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*).⁵⁶⁵ Śaṅkara also, as mentioned earlier, says in the introduction to his commentary on the *BhG* that the Vedic law of actions (*pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma*), when performed with a sense of dedication to God (*īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*) and without expectation of fruits (*phalābhisandhi-varjita*), purifies the mind, which becomes the means of attaining the steadiness of knowledge, and causes the rising of knowledge that leads to liberation.⁵⁶⁶ In the preface to his commentary on the second chapter of the *BhG*, Śaṅkara mentions that it is the established view in the *BhG* that liberation is attained through the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*) only, and not by combining it with action (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya*). In his words, ‘It is therefore the definite conclusion in the *Gītā-sāstra* that liberation is attained through the knowledge of reality only, and not through its combination with action. That such indeed is the teaching (of the *Gītā*), we will show separately in the relevant parts (of the *Gītā*).’⁵⁶⁷ At the beginning of his commentary on *BhG* 3, Śaṅkara declares outright that ‘It is the established conclusion of the *Gītā* and all the Upaniṣads that liberation can be attained only through knowledge.’⁵⁶⁸ Again,

⁵⁶⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 134.

⁵⁶⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyopākramaṇikā*, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁷ *tasmādgītāsu kevalādeva tattvajñānānmokṣaprāptiḥ na karmasamuccitāditi niścito’rthaḥ* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 45).

⁵⁶⁸ *tasmātkevalādeva jñānānmokṣa ityeṣo’rtho niścito gītāsu sarvopaniṣatsu ca* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 139).

while commenting on *BhG* 8.22, Śaṅkara says that the highest person is to be attained by exclusive devotion characterised by knowledge that has, for its object, the self (as is stated in *BhG* 7.17 etc.).⁵⁶⁹ At one place in his commentary on *BhG* 18.66 too, Śaṅkara, citing a number of verses (*BhG* 2.19, 21; 3.3, 26, 28; 5.8, 13, 6.3; 7.18; 9.21, 22; 10.10; 12.6-11 etc.), mentions that all actions have for their basis nescience and desire (*avidyā-kāma-bīja*). So, while action is meant for the ignorant, the steadfastness in knowledge preceded by the renunciation of all actions (*sarva-karma-saṁnyāsa-pūrvikā-jñānaniṣṭhā*) is undertaken by the enlightened. It affirms Śaṅkara's distinction of two types of aspirants, viz. mendicants (*parivrājaka-s*) and householders (*gṛhastha-s*). While the former are entitled to embrace the path of knowledge after renouncing all actions, the latter need to undertake prescribed actions in order to gain mental purity (*śattva-śuddhi*); thus facilitating the path of knowledge.⁵⁷⁰

Thus, the above-mentioned portions chosen at random from the *BhG* commentary of MS and also that of Śaṅkara indicate that both these commentators, despite keeping the non-dualistic stance that the sole and ultimate means of liberation is knowledge (i.e. the realisation of identity of *jīva* and *brahman*) intact, admit the utility of all the three principal means of liberation (i.e. action, devotion, and knowledge)⁵⁷¹ and those of the means subsidiary to them; thereby viewing *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* as the aids to *jñāna-yoga*. Again, though both of them accept the efficacy of dedication to God in the process of reaching liberation, MS's explicit emphasis on devotion to God (as it is held by him that devotion to God,

⁵⁶⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 402.

⁵⁷⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 761-2.

⁵⁷¹ As we have seen, both Śaṅkara and MS support the view that performance of disinterested actions with a sense of allegiance to God purifies the mind, which then becomes suitable for acquiring knowledge that leads to liberation.

together with the knowledge of the Upaniṣadic great sentences, gives rise to the knowledge of reality; and that this knowledge of the reality leads to liberation) indicates a slight shift in philosophical views.

Furthermore, at the very beginning of the introduction to his *GD* (i.e. in introductory verse 1 of the *GD*) MS directly asserts that he will follow the lead of Śaṃkara throughout. In his commentary on *BhG* 3.2, MS states that he is interpreting the text of the *BhG* only after studying Śaṃkara's commentary, though he is only explaining what the Lord intends in the *BhG* and not what Śaṃkara reads into it. In the third concluding verse of his *GD*, MS writes that, though Śaṃkara has explained the *BhG* word for word, MS himself is explicating again it for the purification of his own understanding⁵⁷²etc. These passages may be chosen at random as the yardstick for measuring how far MS remains loyal to Śaṃkara in explaining the import of the *BhG* verses. Thus, our aim here is to find out the extent to which MS follows this 'yardstick' while explaining the means of liberation, which forms a vital theme of the *BhG*. While both Śaṃkara and MS have many points in common, we will mainly focus on those points where the latter seems to say something novel. And in this connection, in order to highlight the differences between MS and Śaṃkara, a review in some detail of MS's attempt to put some devotional and *yogic* colour in the *GD* may not be out of place.

5.2.1. The path of Yoga (*yoga-mārga*)

As noted before, the utility of the eight-limbed *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) or Pātañjala Yoga has been mentioned by MS himself in his *BhR*, where he places this eight-

⁵⁷² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 141 and 775.

limbed *yoga* along the three other *yoga*-s (i.e. *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti yoga*-s) as the means of attaining the supreme goal of human life. By asserting that *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is included in *jñāna-yoga*, MS shows its utility in an emphatic manner. On the other hand, in spite of his assertion under *BhG* 6.29 that the followers of Śaṅkara do not find it necessary to adopt Pātañjala Yoga for realising *brahman*, MS's exhaustive discussion of Pātañjala Yoga in *BhG* 6 and a few other places, including the versified introduction to the *GD*, indicates that he holds this spiritual means to be extremely helpful for those who seek liberation through the means of psychical control, thereby positing it to be an important requirement for practising *jñāna-yoga*, which is otherwise known as *dhyāna-yoga* or *samādhi-yoga*. Besides, in consonance with the non-dualistic view that deep meditation on one's self together with its identity with the supreme self leads to the knowledge of the supreme reality *brahman/ātman*, MS has referred to the *yogic* practices mentioned in the *YV*,⁵⁷³ thereby indicating his support for *yoga* and its practice as admitted by the followers of Advaita for realising the true nature of the self. Thus, in order to show how some verses of the *BhG* may possibly be explained with reference to the doctrines of Yoga as well as that of Vedānta, MS has made use of the *YS* (the *GD* on *BhG* 4.27, 5.22, 6.2, 6.35, 9.14 etc.), *YV* (the *GD* on *BhG* 3.18, 6.35, 6.36 etc.), *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa (on *BhG* 5.22, 6.15 etc.), and the *Gauḍapāḍakārikā* (the *GD* on *BhG* 5.22, 6.23, 6.26 etc.) as the authorities in his discussion of Yoga.⁵⁷⁴

While describing the different stages of such a knower of *brahman*, who is contented only in the self (*ātma-saṁtuṣṭa*), and who is beyond the performance or non-performance of actions on account of his lacking any personal interest in any

⁵⁷³ See Gupta 2006: p. 116.

⁵⁷⁴ See Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 52.

object, as stated by the Lord in *BhG* 3.17-18, MS maintains that liberation or the highest good (*niḥśreyaśa*) cannot be attained through action; for, not being a product of action, liberation is eternally attained. Liberation is not a product of knowledge either, as it is of the nature of the self (*ātma-rūpa*) and eternally achieved (*nitya-prāpta*). Thus, non-achievement (*aprāpti*) of it is only apparent, and is due solely to the ignorance (*ajñāna*) about the self. Such ignorance is eradicated by the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), and on eradication of ignorance by the knowledge of reality, the knower of the self (*ātma-vid*) is left with nothing that has to be achieved either through action or through knowledge. MS thus holds that, for the knower of the self, there remains no purpose (*prayojana*) in performing action or abstaining from it.

In this connection, MS quotes the seven stages of knowledge (*jñāna-bhūmi*) discussed in the *YV*, and shows how these stages of a liberated person correspond to those that are admitted in the Advaita Vedānta. The stages enumerated in the *YV* (i.e. *YV* 3.118.5-6) are: good resolve (*śubhecchā*), reflection (*vicāraṇā*), suitability of the mind (*tanu-mānasā*), union with reality (*sattvāpatti*), non-immediacy (*asaṃsakti*), absence of objects (*padārthābhāvanī*), and reaching the state of witness consciousness (*turīya turyaga*).

MS now explains that the first three among these seven stages (i.e. *śubhecchā*, *vicāraṇā*, and *tanu-mānasā*) correspond to the desire to be liberated (*mokṣecchā*), which is preceded by discrimination between eternal and transient etc. (*nityānitya-vastu-vivekādi*) and terminates in its fruit; viz. reflection on the Upaniṣadic sentences in the form of listening to and reflecting on it (*śravaṇa-manana*) after approaching a competent teacher; and capability of the mind to grasp

subtle entities (*sūkṣma-vastu*) with one-pointed concentration through undergoing contemplation (*nididhyāsana*) respectively. These three phases, being of the nature of the means to liberation (*sādhana-rūpa*), MS asserts, are regarded as the waking state (*jāgratāvasthā*) by *yogin*-s; for in these stages, the world appears to them with a sense of differentiation. That is, to the seeker of truth, the awareness of a pluralistic world characterising a waking state is not still done away with in these stages.

Thus, in order to accommodate the three *yogic* stages of the *YV* mentioned above within his own Advaitic parameters, MS puts forward the fourfold preliminary practices in Vedānta (*sādhana-catustaya*) [that are also mentioned in Śaṅkara's comments on *BS* 1.1.1 etc.] as also another set of triple proximate processes conducive to liberation that consists of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* (that are also stated in Śaṅkara's comments on *BS* 1.1.4, *BU* 2.3.4 etc.).⁵⁷⁵

The fourth stage called the union with the reality (*sattvāpatti*), which is revealed to the seeker as a non-conceptual (*nirvikalpaka*) realisation of the identity of *brahman* and the self (*brahmātmaikya-sākṣātkāra*), emerges from listening to the Upaniṣadic sentences. This stage, according to MS, is known as the dreaming state (*svapnāvasthā*), as the entire world appears to the aspirant to be as untrue as a dream. Thus, the person who has reached up to the fourth stage is called the knower of *brahman* (*brahma-vid*).

⁵⁷⁵ For a detailed account of *sādhana-catustaya*; *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*, refer to chapter 3.5 supra.

The last three stages (i.e. *asaṃsakti*, *padārthābhāvanī*, *turīya*), MS maintains, are the stages varying in degree (*avāntara-bheda*) of liberation in an embodied state (*jīvanmukti*). In the fifth stage, the aspirant, through the practice of conceptual absorption (*savikalpa-samādhi*, i.e. unifying concentration in which the subject-object relationship persists), attains the state of non-conceptual absorption (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*, i.e. unifying concentration in which the subject-object relationship ceases) where the mind gets withdrawn, leading to *asaṃsakti* (non-immediacy) or the state of dreamless-sleep (*suṣuptyavasthā*), from which the *yogin* arises (*vyutthāna*) voluntarily (*svayameva*). Such a *yogin*, MS adds, is a superior type among the knowers of *brahman* (*brahma-vidvara*). The sixth stage, known as the absence of objects (*padārthābhāvanī*), is the state of deep dreamless sleep (*gāḍha-suṣuptyavasthā*), which arises as a result of constant practice of the preceding absorptions and lasts for a longer period, and from which the *yogin* awakens not by himself, but with the efforts of others. He is even more superior among the knowers of *brahman* (*brahma-vidvarīyān*), thereby indicating a still higher stage in the process of attaining disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*). In the seventh and last stage called the state of transcendental self (*turīyāvasthā*), the *yogin* awakens neither by himself nor with the efforts of others, and possesses no sense of diversity whatsoever (*sarvathā bheda-darśanābhāva*). He remains completely self-absorbed in a ‘perfect mass of supreme bliss’ (*paripūrṇa-paramānanda-ghana*). The *yogin* thus gives up all efforts of his own, and all his bodily functions (*daihika-vyavahāra*) are taken care of by others, while the supreme Lord (*parameśvara*) directs his life breath (*prāṇa-vāyu*). Thus, one who reaches this stage is said to have excelled all the other knowers of *brahman* (*brahma-*

vidvariṣṭha). With the support of the *BP* and the Śruti texts, MS asserts that in this stage, the *yogin* (*jīvanmukta*) is not aware of his own physical body; and such a state leads to final emancipation on casting off physical body (*videha-mukti*), preceded by the total exhaustion of his *prārabdha-karma* (accumulated past actions). MS concludes that in the first three stages, which have not been able to produce the knowledge of the reality, the seeker still remains unenlightened (*ajñā*) and need not do any work. So, for the *jīvanmukta*, possessed with the knowledge of the reality (in the course of adhering to the rest of the stages), there cannot be any possibility of undertaking any action.

While commenting on *BhG* 6.43 ff., which assert the utility of knowledge and *yogic* accomplishment of earlier births in attaining liberation in later births (in due course of efforts for liberation), MS acknowledges these seven stages of the *YV* in words almost similar to the passages quoted earlier.⁵⁷⁶ In a word, in the abovementioned seven mental places of a liberated one admitted in the *YV*, the first three stages (*śubhecchā*, *vicāraṇā*, and *tanu-mānasā*) constitute the nature of the means to the fourth stage, the fourth stage (*sattvāpatti*) indicates enlightenment, and the last three stages (*asaṃsakti*, *padārthābhāvanī*, *turīya*) describe the state of liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*); though Śaṃkara, while commenting on these *BhG* verses, places no such emphasis on the *yogic* practices while providing his non-dualistic interpretation. Thus, as mentioned earlier, in sharp contrast with Śaṃkara, the commentary of MS on *BhG* 6 and many verses in *BhG* 2, 4, 5 etc. contains an elaborate account of the eightfold Yoga prescribed by Patañjali, and

⁵⁷⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 157-8, 318-20.

also frequent reference to the *YV*, thereby admitting their utility in the Advaitic means of liberation.

In this connection, it may be pointed out that Dhanapati Sūri finds faults with MS's attempt to make use of the *YV*. In his comment on *BhG* 3.18, MS says that even after undergoing the first three stages of knowledge of the *YV*, the seeker fails to become fully enlightened, and that he needs to proceed further. Dhanapati alleges that MS has, by this assertion, indicated the irrelevancy of the sevenfold stages of the *YV*. However, he has not put forward any argument to substantiate this claim.⁵⁷⁷ Further, while commenting on *BhG* 6.29, in order to substantiate the view that self-realisation is possible by both the ways, viz. Yoga (i.e. the restraint of the modifications of the mind) and knowledge (i.e. the discrimination of the all-pervasive consciousness from the insentient matter), MS quotes from the *YV*, which refers to the two ways for the elimination of the mind (*cittanāśa*, i.e. separation of the witness from its limiting adjunct, viz. mind). MS adds that whereas the first way is followed by the followers of Patañjali, the second one is upheld by the followers of the Śaṅkara Vedānta. MS asserts that, since on having the knowledge of the substratum (i.e. all-pervasive consciousness) the non-perception of the mind and the objects (that are merely superimposed on that substratum) becomes easily feasible, Śaṅkara has nowhere talked about the necessity of Yoga for the knowers of *brahman*. In his opinion, since deliberation on the Upaniṣadic sentences causes removal of defilements of the mind, the mendicants of the highest order (*parama-haṃsa*-s) approach the teachers in order to deliberate on the Upaniṣadic sentences,

⁵⁷⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, p. 158.

instead of practising Yoga for attaining self-realisation.⁵⁷⁸ In consonance with the objections raised by Nīlakaṇṭha,⁵⁷⁹ Dhanapati has taken exception to MS in this matter as well. He has pointed out that MS's assertion that Śaṃkara has nowhere advocated the utility of Yoga cannot be accepted, and that neither can his view that, for the Advaitins, *yogic* practice is not of much use for the attainment of self-realisation, since the purpose thereof is served by the deliberation on the Upaniṣadic sentences. In his commentary on *BS* 1.1.1, Śaṃkara himself mentions that the deliberation on *brahman* needs to be followed by the observance of the fourfold preliminary practices (which are undertaken by the *adhikārin* in accordance with the Śruti text: 'You see, Maitreyī — it is one's self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and on which one should reflect and concentrate' *BU* 2.4.5), which lends support to the utility of *yogic* practice.⁵⁸⁰ To speak of the necessity of listening to the Vedāntic scriptures towards self-realisation validates the need of the meditative *yogic* practice for the restraint of the mind (*citta-nirodha*), just as there is the need of *karma-yoga* for the purification of the mind. Dhanapati again rebuts MS by saying that his attempt to cite the *YV* in this connection is far from satisfactory, as the citation from the *YV* in question conveys the twofold means of Yoga and knowledge as the means of annihilation of the mind (*citta-nāśa*), and not as the means of direct realisation of the witnessing self (*sākṣi-sākṣātkāra*), as is claimed by MS. Further, giving several references to the Upaniṣadic passages and the view of Śaṃkara on those passages, Dhanapati claims that in such passages, the

⁵⁷⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 335-6.

⁵⁷⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Nīlakaṇṭhavyākhyā*, pp. 319-20.

⁵⁸⁰ It should be noted that both these sets of the means of liberation, e.g. *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*; and *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* have been considerably dealt with by MS in his *GD*, including the *VK*, *AdS* etc. (Specially, the latter set gets prominence in these two works).

observance of the meditative *yogic* process (*dhyāna-yoga*) is also admitted as one of the causes of the knowledge of reality.⁵⁸¹

Besides the above traditional opinion of Dhanapati Sūri about the usage of Yoga by Śaṅkara, MS etc. in the tradition of Advaita, some modern scholars also have discussed this problem. While explaining the above-mentioned seven stages of knowledge of the *YV* as a means of self-realisation, Sanjukta Gupta points out that here, too, MS has judiciously maintained his support for the theistic consideration along with the Advaitic *yoga* practice, especially when he reiterates that even in the final stage of this sevenfold schema, the *jīvanmukta* is supported by the Lord himself.⁵⁸² Andrew O. Fort, in course of dealing with the idea of *jīvanmukti* in scholastic Advaita, having pointed out the emphasis on the Sāṃkya ideas and the Yoga practices that is found not only in many lesser known Upaniṣads but also in many post-Śaṅkara works like the *YV*, *JMV*, *PD* etc., has also discussed the attitude of the *GD* towards *yogic* practices as a case of what he calls the Yogic Advaita. Based on the topics dealt with in the *GD*, ranging from MS's frequent references in the *GD* to the *JMV* (e.g. the *GD* on *BhG* 6.36 etc.), to the *YV*, Pātañjala Yoga etc.,⁵⁸³ Fort opines that these are all distinctive of the Yogic Advaita, and are far from the views held by the Advaita Vedāntins at large that may be found in MS's *magnum opus AdS*.⁵⁸⁴ In the same tone, Gupta Gombrich also alleges that since, according to the Advaita Vedānta, the mind too ceases at the time of obtaining liberation, MS's attempt at explaining the grades of spiritual development of the devotees with

⁵⁸¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, p. 317 ff.

⁵⁸² See Gupta 2006: p. 117.

⁵⁸³ Compare *YV* 3.118.5-6 (*Yogavāsiṣṭha* 2008: p. 402) and Mokṣadānanda 2006: p. 284 ff.

⁵⁸⁴ See Fort 2013: pp. 65-8, 122-5, and 84-125 ff.

reference to the *YV* does not hold good.⁵⁸⁵ Again, many contemporary writers, on the basis of various works of Śaṅkara, have talked about Śaṅkara's views on Yoga as a means of attaining liberation, thereby exploring the role of this means of salvation as admitted in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta. However, in the present context, we refrain from going into its detail,⁵⁸⁶ as we must turn our attention to the path of devotion or *bhakti-yoga* as another important means of attaining liberation in the *BhG*, which perhaps attracts more consideration, so far as MS's philosophical stand is concerned.

In the remainder of this chapter, we propose to evaluate critically MS's attempt to accommodate *bhakti* in his own non-dualistic philosophical consideration with special reference to his *GD* in particular and the greater Advaitic tradition of Śaṅkara in general. A brief account of the path of knowledge versus the path of devotion as held by MS, and MS versus Śaṅkara on the *BhG* will also be presented in this connection. In doing so, important verses of the *BhG* expressing devotional dimension will be viewed.

5.2.2. A critical estimate on the accommodation of *bhakti* in the

Gūḍhārthadīpikā

MS has made a distinctive attempt at accommodating devotion to the Lord (*bhagavadbhakti*) in the metaphysics of Advaita Vedānta in his commentary on the *BhG*, our aim in this section is to make a critical assessment of this attempt of MS,

⁵⁸⁵ Gupta Gombrich 1991: pp. 239-40.

⁵⁸⁶ Interested readers may refer to Nakamura 1979, Raja 1990, Halbfass 1992: pp. 205-42, Rukmani 1993: pp. 395-404, Sundaresan 1998, Mishra 2001-02, Fort 2013: pp. 45-6 etc. as some of the examples of the views of modern scholars on this issue.

taking into account both his works and other traditional works of the Advaita Vedānta, and other well-known texts dealing with devotion; thereby bringing out his special contribution to the non-dualistic philosophy of Śaṅkara's school, of which he is regarded as one of the last pioneering figures.

This section is subdivided into i) a prelude to *bhakti* and *bhakti-yoga*, ii) the nature and constituents of *bhakti-yoga*, iii) and the complete surrender to the Lord.

5.2.2.1. A prelude to *bhakti* and *bhakti-yoga* in the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

Though Śaṅkara, MS, and many other commentators of the *BhG* have accorded a significant place to *bhakti* in the schema of attaining liberation, Rāmaṇuja maintains that the Lord has promulgated (in the *BhG*) *bhakti-yoga*, as aided by *karma* and *jñāna-yoga*-s and upheld by Vedānta, as the means of attaining the supreme end of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*), i.e. salvation or liberation (*mokṣa*), thereby professing *bhakti-yoga* as the principal means of liberation in relation to the other two means, e.g. *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*. That *bhakti-yoga* is the most significant part of the means of liberation in the *BhG* is explicitly uttered by the Lord himself when he says that he is attained by exclusive devotion only, and not by any other means: 'Thus, as I am and as you have seen me, I cannot be seen with the aid of the Vedas, austerities, gifts and sacrifices' (*BhG* 11.53); 'Only through exclusive *bhakti* can I be seen thus, Arjuna, and known as I really am, and entered into, enemy-tamer' (*BhG* 11.54). Though the notion of devotion is understood in some verses of the first group of six chapters in the *BhG* in connection with performance of disinterested actions with a sense of dedication to God etc., and also

in the observance of *jñāna-yoga* in the third group of six chapters sporadically, the detailed discussion of *bhakti* as a means of reaching the supreme self occurs only in the intermediate six chapters of the text.⁵⁸⁷

In the introduction to his *GD*, MS clearly mentions that devotion is absolutely necessary for removing the obstacles in the path of self-realisation, and also that devotion can be classified into three types: mixed with rites and duties (*karma-miśrā*), pure (*śuddhā*) and mixed with knowledge (*jñāna-miśrā*). In addition, devotion to the Lord is a necessary feature of the *jīvanmukta*-s.⁵⁸⁸ In the course of his commentary on *BhG* 13.10, MS explains devotion to be love (*prīti*) for Lord Vāsudeva, the supreme lord, arising from the knowledge that he is the most excellent among all (*bhagavati vāsudeve parameśvare bhaktiḥ sarvotrṣṭatva-jñāna-pūrvikā-prītiḥ*). He holds that it is unwavering (*avyabhicāri*), as it cannot be obstructed by any adverse cause at all, and that it causes knowledge. MS substantiates this with the support of a testimony: ‘As long as love for me, the Lord Vāsudeva, does not arise (in oneself), he cannot be free from the association with the body.’⁵⁸⁹ Again, in his *BhR*, he distinguishes between *brahma-vidyā* and *bhakti*. He maintains that while the conceptual cognition of the Lord (*savikalpaka-vṛtti*) by the melted mind wherein his form (*bhagavadākāra*) is reflected is known as *bhakti*, the modal change in the form of non-dual *brahman* bereft of attributes (*nirvikalpaka-vṛtti*), when the mind is not melted, is called *brahma-vidyā*.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ The term *bhakti* along with its other similar forms like *bhakta*, *abhakta*, *ekabhakti*, *bhaktimat* and the root word *bhaj* arises nearly forty two times in the text (*BhG* 4.3; 6.31, 47; 7.16, 17, 21, 23, 28; 8.10, 22; 9.13, 14, 23, 26, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34; 10.8, 10; 11.54, 55; 12.1, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20; 13.10, 18; 14.26; 15.19; 18.54, 55, 65, 67, 68) [cf. Mainkar 1969: Footnote 1, p. 12]. Also see Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 240.

⁵⁸⁸ *GD*, introductory verses 7 and 39.

⁵⁸⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 548 (Also see Mishra 2009: p. 192).

⁵⁹⁰ *Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha* 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.1.19, p. 15 (Also see Mishra 2009: p. 224, Kar 2006: p. 232).

In this connection, Śaṃkara holds that ‘devotion is worshipping the Lord’ (*bhajanam bhaktiḥ*) with single-minded concentration (*ananya-yoga*) in an unswerving conviction that there is nothing higher than Lord Vāsudeva, and hence he alone is our refuge. He also maintains that ‘This devotion (being the means to knowledge) is also (known as) knowledge’ (*sā ca jñānam*).⁵⁹¹ While explaining *BhG* 8.10 too, Śaṃkara holds that ‘devotion’ means worshipping the Lord. On the other hand, Śaṃkara sometimes defines *bhakti* as *jñāna*. In his opinion, the word *bhakti* employed in *BhG* 8.22 means ‘devotion characterised by the knowledge of the self’ (*jñāna-lakṣaṇā-ātmaviśayā-bhaktiḥ*), as has been stated in *BhG* 7.17, while in *BhG* 12.20 it means ‘devotion characterised by the knowledge of the highest reality’ (*paramārtha-jñāna-lakṣaṇā-bhakti*);⁵⁹² in *BhG* 18.54 it means ‘devotion as worshipping the Lord (*bhajana*), which is characterised by the highest knowledge (*uttamā-jñāna-lakṣaṇā-bhakti*), as has been stated in *BhG* 7.16; in *BhG* 18.55 it means ‘devotion characterised by the steadfastness of knowledge’ (*jñānaniṣṭhā-lakṣaṇā-bhakti*).⁵⁹³ The view that devotion is characterised by knowledge is admitted by MS as well in his commentary on *BhG* 18.54-55 etc. Again, according to the *Nighaṇṭu* (i.e. the Vedic concordance), the terms *sevā* (service), *bhakti* (devotion), *upāsti* (prayer) etc. yield the same meaning.⁵⁹⁴

Thus, these two explanations of what devotion means for MS show him not only as a devotee, as admitted by the dualists, but also as an ardent devotee who upholds the non-dualistic view, i.e. *jñānī-bhakta*.

⁵⁹¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchamkarabhāṣyam*, p. 548 (Also see his comments on *BhG* 14.26, p. 606).

⁵⁹² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchamkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 389, 402 and 518.

⁵⁹³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchamkarabhāṣyam*, p. 741.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Maitra 2006: p. 210.

Furthermore, throughout his *BhG* commentary MS refers to the instances of several devotees, viz. Vrajavāsins, Uddhava, Sanaka, Nārada, Pṛthu, Śukadeva (the *GD* on *BhG* 7.16 etc.), Śrīdāma (the *GD* on *BhG* 7.25, 9.26 etc.), Ajāmila (the *GD* on *BhG* 9.30, 9.31 etc.), Prahlāda (the *GD* on *BhG* 7.16, 9.31, 18.66 etc.), Dhruva, Gajendra (the *GD* on *BhG* 7.16, 9.31 etc.), Ambarīṣa (the *GD* on *BhG* 18.66 etc.), *gopī*-s (the *GD* on *BhG* 7.16, 18.66 etc.) etc., who are spoken of quite often in the *BP*, but are seldom mentioned by the supporters of non-dualistic Vedānta. For a thorough account of those devotees and their experiences, MS refers the reader in the *GD* on *BhG* 7.16, 18.65, 18.66 etc. to his *BhR*. Further, in a typical manner, MS conveys his devotional yearning in versified form, at the beginning and end of some of the chapters of his *BhG* commentary (e.g. invocatory verses in the *GD* on *BhG* 7, 13; concluding verses in the *GD* on *BhG* 9-12, 14, 15 etc.).⁵⁹⁵

After this short account of *bhakti* and its significance in the eyes of MS and Śaṅkara, we may discuss the definition of *bhakti* along with its nature, forms etc. as given by MS in his *BhR*. While stating the general characteristics of *bhakti*, MS maintains that ‘*bhakti* is the incessant flow of the modification of the mind (of the devotee) directed towards the Lord of all (*sarveśvara*) when it (i.e., the mind of the devotee) melts by the spiritual discipline related to the Lord (which is observed by the devotee).’⁵⁹⁶ While giving his own exposition on it, MS, with the support of the *BP* texts (i.e., *BP* 7.1.31, 3.29.11-12), says that here, the ‘spiritual discipline related to the Lord’ (*bhagavaddharma*) means the hearing of the greatness and other virtues of the Lord, and not necessarily the performance of a religious practice. MS maintains that in the Advaita tradition, modification of the mind (*vṛtti*) always

⁵⁹⁵ References are to the edition of *Bhagavadgītā* 1999 (Also see Nelson 1988: p. 78).

⁵⁹⁶ *drutasya bhagavaddharmamāddhārāvāhikatām gatā / sarveśe manaso vṛttirbhaktirityabhidhīyate* // (*BhR* 1.3).

means the mind's assuming the form of the object of that modification. Accordingly, *bhakti* is held by the learned as a mental state assuming the form of the Lord by the mind when it (i.e. the mind) melts and possesses an incessant flow like the stream of the Ganges that arises as the instinctive reaction to the stimuli such as desire (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*) etc. as a result of hearing the virtuous qualities of the Lord (*bhagavadguṇa-śravaṇa*). Such are the characteristics of the unqualified *bhakti-yoga* (*nirguṇa-bhakti-yoga*).⁵⁹⁷ Further, in connection with explaining the unqualified nature of devotion, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, quoting the same *BP* texts (i.e. *BP* 3.29.11-12) as *MS*, maintains in his commentary on the *SB* of *MS* that *nirguṇa-bhakti* is the highest means of attaining liberation.⁵⁹⁸

Besides the above definition of *bhakti* admitted by *MS* and corroborated by the *BP*, there are two authoritative works on *bhakti* later than the *BP*, giving, for the first time, a systematic exposition of *bhakti* in an aphoristic manner, and taking Lord Vāsudeva as the object of supreme love (*parānurakti*). These works are the *Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra* (*ŚBhS*) and *Nārada bhaktisūtra* (*NBhS*). While indicating the essential nature (*svarūpa*) of *bhakti*, these two works speak almost in the same tone. It is said in the *ŚBhS* that 'It (*bhakti*) is the highest love for God' (*sā parā'nuraktirīśvare*, *ŚBhS* 1.1.2), and that 'It (*bhakti*) is the principal means, as others (i.e. the means of *jñāna*, *yoga* etc.) depend on it' (*sā mukhyetarā'pekṣitatvāt*, *ŚBhS* 1.2.1). In this connection, the *NBhS* holds that 'It (i.e. *bhakti*) is indeed of the nature of supreme love (of God)' [*sā tasmin paramapremarūpā*, *NBhS* 2], 'Some are of the opinion that knowledge alone is the means of attaining it (*bhakti*)' [*tasyāḥ*

⁵⁹⁷ Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.3 and the author's annotation thereon, pp. 18-20 (Also see Gupta 2006: p. 120, Nelson 1986: pp. 260-1, Kar 2006: p. 232).

⁵⁹⁸ *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: *Nyāyaratnāvalī*, pp. 364-5.

jñānameva sādhanamityeke, NBhS 28], and that ‘Others hold that they (i.e. the means of knowledge and that of *bhakti*) are interdependent’ (*anyonyāśrayatvamityanye*, NBhS 29)⁵⁹⁹-- a statement which also finds support in the *BhG*: ‘Having become *brahman*, serene of spirit, he does not grieve, he does not crave: equable to all creatures, he achieves the ultimate *bhakti* of me’ (*BhG* 18.54).⁶⁰⁰

Thus, MS’s understanding of *bhakti* as love for the Lord in terms of his knowledge (i.e. the knowledge of the Lord in reality) can be backed up with the views of these two *bhaktisūtra*-s and the *BhG* itself. Let us discuss below the role that this spiritual discipline (i.e. *bhakti-yoga*) plays in the attainment of liberation as admitted in the *BhG* in particular and in the Advaita Vedānta in general.

Towards the end of *BhG* 6 (i.e. *BhG* 6.46) [which mainly deals with Yoga as a means of liberation and paves the way for devotion as another means of liberation that has been discussed primarily in *BhG* 7-12], the Lord extols the *yogin* by saying that he (i.e. the *yogin*) excels ascetics (*tapasvin*-s), men of knowledge (*jñānin*-s), and even men of action (*karmin*-s); and again that among all the *yogin*-s, one who worships the Lord with his inner-self absorbed in the Lord and with faith (*śraddhā*), is the greatest (*BhG* 6.47). Thus, the *BhG* corroborates the view that among the aspirants for liberation, the devotees are always held in the highest esteem. MS explains in this connection that the Lord, who is worshipped as Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of all lords, may be treated by the devotees as either qualified (*saguṇa*) or as non-qualified (*nirguṇa*).⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ *Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra* 1998: pp. 4 and 59; *Parīṣiṣṭam* 2.2, *Nārada bhaktisūtram*, pp. 75-6.

⁶⁰⁰ See Vāsudevānanda 2006: p. 535.

⁶⁰¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 339.

The *BhG* says that four kinds of people of virtuous deeds (*sukṛtin-s*) [viz. the suffering (*ārta-s*), the seekers for knowledge (*jijñāsu-s*), the seekers for prosperity (*arthārthin-s*), and the wise (*jñānin-s*)], the wise who are in constant union with the Lord and hold single-minded devotion to him excel, and so, are dear to him (i.e. the Lord) [*BhG* 7.16-17]. While explaining these verses, MS finds the paths of knowledge and devotion to be parallel. Thus, it is asserted by MS that a devotee desiring nothing in return for his love for the Lord is wise. MS maintains that among the above-mentioned four types of people of virtuous deeds, the wise, who are the knower of reality by virtue of being free from all desires, excel; as they are always engrossed in and solely devoted to the Lord, who is non-different from their indwelling selves. So, he is endowed with single-pointed devotion (*eka-bhakti*) to God, because he does not have any other object of attachment (*anurakti-viṣaya*). The idea is that, since the Lord, the supreme self, who is non-different from the indwelling self, is extremely dear, i.e. an object of unconditioned love (*nirupādhi-premāspada*) to the wise; the wise too are very much dear to the supreme Lord. MS also says that a wise is he who is ever characterised by the knowledge that consists of the direct realisation of the nature of the Lord (*bhagavattattva-sākṣātkāra-jñāna*), who has overcome the realm of *māyā*, and all whose desires have ceased. Thus, the devotee possessing disinterested love (*niṣkāma-prema-bhakta*) is none but the wise. Again, he refers the reader to his *BhR* where he has elaborately dealt with devotion [that by its very nature is love for the Lord (*bhagavadanurakti-rūpa*)], along with the varieties of devotion as well as of the devotees.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 362-3 and Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1 and 2.

Thus, among the four types of people of virtuous deeds, MS has characterised the first three types [i.e. (i) the suffering (e.g. the Vrajavāsins, the princes imprisoned by Jarāsandha, Draupadī, Gajendra), (ii) the seekers for knowledge (e.g. Mucukunda, king Janaka, Śrutadeva, Uddhava), and (iii) the seekers for prosperity (e.g. Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Upamanyu, Dhruva)] as those devotees who possess desire (*sakāma*), and who have also overcome the realm of *māyā* through worshipping the Lord; while the fourth type, viz. the wise (*jñānin-s*), are those devotees who are devoid of desire for the fruit of their actions (*niṣkāma*), and have thus overcome the realm of *māyā*. MS also holds that Sanaka, Nārada, Prahlāda, Pṛthu, Śukadeva etc. may be cited as examples of such devotees who have no interest for the fruit of their actions, and are also endowed with knowledge (*niṣkāma-bhakta-jñānī*), while the *gopī-s*, Akrūra, Yudhiṣṭhira etc. are the examples of the devotees characterised by lack of self-interest and pure love (*niṣkāma-śuddha-prema-bhakta*).

However, Vallabhācārya, an exponent of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta or *Puṣṭimārga* (according to which *puṣṭi* or the grace of the Lord, after being occasioned by devotion, causes liberation), disagrees with MS.⁶⁰³ With the support of the *BP* texts (i.e. *BP* 11.12.6-8), Vallabhācārya maintains in this connection that, though all the devotees mentioned by MS such as Gajendra, Śaunaka, Dhruva, Śuka etc. are admitted as those who have performed virtuous deeds in their past lives. The *gopī-s*, the devotees of the *Puṣṭimārga* etc., in spite of lacking merit (*puṇya*) earned by virtuous deeds performed either in an earlier life or in the present life,

⁶⁰³ See Sharma 1976: p. 378.

attained supernatural desire and love only through the grace of Lord (*bhagavatsvarūpānugraha-baleṇa-eva-alaukika-kāma-sneha-vantaḥ*).⁶⁰⁴

At the beginning of chapter twelve of the *BhG*, in response to Arjuna's question regarding the relative superiority of meditation on the supreme self as compared to meditation on the imperishable, the Lord declares the former to be more effective than the latter. According to him, the followers of the former, who meditate on the supreme self, being imbued with supreme faith and steadfastness in him, are considered to be the most adept among all *yogin-s* (*BhG* 12.1-2). MS maintains in this connection that the devotees who absorb their minds in Lord Vāsudeva, and consider him as (i) the supreme God (*parameśvara*), (ii) *brahman* with attributes (*saguṇa brahman*), (iii) the sole refuge (*ananya-śaraṇa*), regard him as an object of unbounded love. Accordingly, they constantly meditate on the Lord, who is (i) the Lord of all lords of Yoga (*sarva-yogeśvarāṇāmīśvara*), (ii) all-knowing (*sarvajña*), and (iii) the abode of all auspicious qualities (*samastakalyāṇa-guṇa-nīlaya*) that also has a form (*sākāra*). Such devotees always remain absorbed (*nityayukta*) in him with utmost faith.⁶⁰⁵

In the eleventh chapter of the *BhG*, after showing his universal forms to Arjuna, the Lord says that by no means other than exclusive devotion is he seen in his full forms, known in reality and attained (*BhG* 11.53-54). MS explains these two verses in the following manner. He says that, according to the scriptures, the Lord is known only through exclusive devotion, which is nothing but being established in him in the form of unbounded love (*niratiśaya-prīti*) for him. Not only is he known

⁶⁰⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: *Tattvadīpikā* of Vallabhācārya on *BhG* 7.16, p. 38.

⁶⁰⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 501-2.

through unswerving devotion consistent with the scriptures; on the maturity of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* etc. on the Upaniṣadic sayings, the Lord is also directly realised in his true being by the devotee. Moreover, with the removal of nescience and its products as a result of direct realisation of the Lord's true nature, he is also attained in his true nature by the devotee.⁶⁰⁶ Thus, in the verse *BhG* 11.54, the statement of the Lord that he is 'seen in his full forms', 'known in reality', and 'attained', refers to three different stages of *bhakti-yoga*, where exclusive devotion (*ananyā bhakti*) subsists uniformly.⁶⁰⁷

Śaṅkara makes this point more explicit when he says that 'exclusive devotion' in this context means that devotion which never turns to any other object but the Lord, and that by which is comprehended nothing else but Lord Vāsudeva by all senses,⁶⁰⁸ thereby implying that there exists nothing in reality that is other than the supreme self.⁶⁰⁹

The teaching of *bhakti-yoga* in all its dimensions is found again in a nutshell in the following utterance of the Lord: 'Only he comes to me, Pāṇḍava, who acts for me, who holds me as the highest, who is devoted to me without self-interest and without any animosity against any creature' (*BhG* 11.55). MS, in the light of Śaṅkara's commentary, explains this statement in the following way. He maintains that one who performs actions sanctioned by the scriptures for the sake of the Lord alone, to whom the Lord alone is accepted as the supreme object to be attained (*parama prāptavya*), who is bereft of longing for external objects (*bāhya-*

⁶⁰⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 496-7.

⁶⁰⁷ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 241.

⁶⁰⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 496-7.

⁶⁰⁹ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 120.

vastu-sprhā-sūnya), and who does not have animosity (*vidveṣa*) towards anybody, including those who harm (*apakāri*) him, attains the Lord in identity (*abheda*) with his own being. Thus, MS, following Śaṅkara, regards this verse as expressing the essence of teaching of the *BhG* (*Gītāśāstrasya sārabhūtam artham*), thereby extolling *bhakti-yoga* as a means of attaining the Lord i.e. liberation.⁶¹⁰ Śrīdhara, too, holds that this verse expresses the supreme secret as well as the essence of all scriptures (*sarva-śāstra-sāraṃ paramaṃ rahasyam*).⁶¹¹

Again, after mentioning the relative merits of the two types of meditation, viz. (i) that on the supreme self with devotion, (ii) and that on the imperishable, the Lord clearly affirms the superiority of those who undertake the former, as it is the easier way for attaining emancipation, as compared to the arduous way of worshipping the formless reality (*BhG* 12.6-7). This verse, in the view of MS, is extremely important. He explains that those who have dispelled all obstacles through meditation on the *brahman* with attributes, attain the knowledge of reality (*tattva-jñāna*), even without having instruction of a teacher and undergoing all hardships of the recurring practice of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* etc., as a result of self-revelation of the Upaniṣadic texts coupled with the grace of the Lord. Thus, with the eradication of nescience and its products, he attains the final emancipation (*parama-kaivalya*), the result of worshipping the unqualified *brahman*, after the enjoyment of divine glory (*aiśvarya*) in the world of Brahmā (*brahma-loka*). In support of his view, MS quotes the Śruti text: ‘He...beholds the fort-dwelling person far beyond this entire mass of living beings’ (*PU* 5.5). Therefore, even without the hardships mentioned earlier, the knowers of the

⁶¹⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 497; *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 497-8.

⁶¹¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, p. 497.

qualified *brahman* reach the fruit of meditation on the unqualified *brahman* with the grace of the Lord.⁶¹²

Śaṅkara's explanation on the above Śruti text makes this point more explicit. He says that one who knows the syllable *OM* with three modes (*mātrā*), sees through meditation the person called the supreme self that has entered into all bodies, and that is far beyond *hiranyagarbha*, which is the mass of living beings.⁶¹³

The magnanimity of the Lord towards his devotees is again revealed when he says that even those who are unable to observe practicing contemplation reach the Lord by performing actions as service to him (*BhG* 12.10). MS holds that with the performance of actions like hearing and chanting of the Lord's name (*śravaṇa-kīrtanādi*), known as the *bhāgavata-dharma*,⁶¹⁴ the devotee attains perfection that is typified as non-different from *brahman*, due to purification of the mind and emergence of knowledge.

In the concluding verse of the twelfth chapter of the *BhG*, which is mainly concerned with devotion as the means of attaining the supreme self, the Lord says that those following this path are exceedingly dear to him (*BhG* 12.20). MS's explanation of this verse shows a blending of the path of knowledge with that of devotion. He maintains that, though by practising the elixir of law (*dharmāmṛta*) with extreme faith, one becomes very dear to the supreme God, Lord Viṣṇu, and though it (i.e. the elixir of law) becomes inherent in him, even so, it should be undertaken by one who (i) desires emancipation, (ii) wishes to know the reality of the self, and (iii) wants to attain the highest state of Lord Viṣṇu. Thus, in the case of

⁶¹² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 506-7.

⁶¹³ *Śrīśāṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, pp. 286-7 (Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. III, pp. 70-1).

⁶¹⁴ Religious practices related to Viṣṇu, which has been discussed in the foregoing discussion (i.e. on *BhG* 9.14 etc.).

one who aspires after the unqualified *brahman* on account of having perfection in meditation on the qualified *brahman*, there is the direct realisation of the reality put forth in the Upaniṣadic texts, as a result of recurring practices of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsana* etc. The claim that, since the Upaniṣadic great sayings like ‘That thou art’ leads to liberation, one should seek out the meaning of the term ‘that’ (*tat*) [in ‘That thou art’], is thus established in the six intermediate chapters of the *BhG*.⁶¹⁵

Śaṅkara’s non-dualistic interpretation is noteworthy here, where he maintains that those devotees who are renunciates and who also take resort to devotion characterised by the knowledge of the highest reality (*paramārtha-jñāna-lakṣaṇā-bhakti*) are dear to the Lord.⁶¹⁶

While all the above-mentioned verses of the *BhG* state *bhakti-yoga* to be the sole means of attaining the supreme self or the supreme goal (i.e. liberation), the Lord advises Arjuna in the *BhG* to worship him for transcending this transient world of unhappiness (*BhG* 9.33). In a more succinct way, the Lord advises Arjuna in the following verse: ‘May your thoughts be toward me, your love toward me, your sacrifice toward me, your homage toward me, and you shall come to me, having thus yoked yourself to me as your highest goal’ (*BhG* 9.34). Again, the same statement is found in the concluding chapter of the *BhG* as the final teaching of the Lord to Arjuna: ‘May your thoughts be toward me, your love toward me, your sacrifice toward me, your homage toward me, and you shall come to me; I promise you truly, for you are dear to me’ (*BhG* 18.65).⁶¹⁷ All these assertions thus affirm the truth that *bhakti-yoga* is viewed in the *BhG* as a significant (and also the instant)

⁶¹⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 509, 518-9.

⁶¹⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 518.

⁶¹⁷ Translation is not from Buitenen in toto.

means of attaining the supreme reality.⁶¹⁸ This view which will receive further support as we proceed, following MS in greater detail.

5.2.2.2. The nature and constituents of *bhakti-yoga*

We have thus shown above the utmost importance of devotion involved in *bhakti-yoga* as the means of attaining the supreme self, the nature and components of that means are indicated by the *BhG* in one of its important verses, viz. *BhG* 9.34 just cited before, which mentions the characteristics of *bhakti-yoga* as having *manana* with *bhakti*, *yajña* with *bhakti*, and *namaskāra* with *bhakti*. While ‘reflection’ (*manana*) is used in the sense of meditation (*dhyāna*), worshipping (*upāsana*), contemplation (*nididhyāsana*) etc., *yajana* means worshipping God, and *namaskāra* means prostrating oneself before the Lord. All these elements indicate *bhakti*, their combination leading to the formation of the *bhakti-yoga* propounded in the *BhG*. This view may also find support in the *Nighaṇṭu* (i.e. the Vedic concordance), where the terms *sevā*, *bhakti*, *upāsti* etc. mean the same thing.⁶¹⁹ While explaining the verse, MS says, in agreement with Śaṅkara, that a person who has fixed his mind on the Lord (*manmanā*) with devotion (*madbhakta*) and adoration (*madyājñin*), having saluted him through body, mind, and speech (*namaskāra*), and who has also accepted God as the supreme end (*matparāyaṇa*), having taken sole refuge in him (*madeka-sāraṇa*), after uniting his own mind with the Lord, surely reaches the Lord or the supreme self, who is by nature self-effulgent (*svaprakāśa*), supreme bliss-concentrate (*paramānanda-ghana*), bereft of all disturbances (*sarvopadrava-sūnya*)

⁶¹⁸ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 241.

⁶¹⁹ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 107, 243-5.

and untouched by fear (*abhaya*). Śaṅkara makes his non-dualistic stance explicit when by the supreme self he means here the self of all beings as well as the supreme goal.⁶²⁰

In *BhG* 9.14, the basic features of *bhakti-yoga* are mentioned clearly: ‘There are those who, always yoked to devotion, adore me and glorify me, while exerting themselves with fortitude, and pay homage to me’ (*BhG* 9.14). Thus, the verse enumerates three significant approaches of worship, e.g. *kīrtana*, *yātanta*, and *namaskāra*, which are explained by MS in the following way. He maintains that having approached a teacher who is always established in *brahman* (*brahma-niṣṭha*), and reflecting on the Upaniṣadic texts, the devotee sings the praise of the Lord’s nature (*kīrtana*) which is presented by the entire Upaniṣadic lore as the nature of *brahman*. Even when not sitting with the teacher, he also utters the *praṇava* and recites the Upaniṣadic texts. Thus, with the accomplishment of *śravaṇa-manana* etc. and also of *śama-damādi-sādhana-sampat* (meaning *yātanta*), they pay obeisance (*namskāra*) with their body, mind and speech (*kāya-mano-vākya*) to Lord Vāsudeva, the repository of all auspicious qualities, the desired Lord (*iṣṭa-devatā*) of all and the master (*guru*).⁶²¹

As the verse under consideration uses the conjunction ‘and’ (*ca*) in the word ‘*namasyantaśca*’, MS holds that by this usage of *ca* is to be understood ‘listening to the glory of Lord Viṣṇu etc.’ (*śravaṇādi*) which go along with singing his laudation (*vandana-sahacarita*), as stated in the verse of the *BP* enumerating the nine forms of devotion (*navavidhā-bhakti*): ‘Listening to the glory of Viṣṇu, singing the praise of him, contemplating him, offering obeisance to his feet, worshipping

⁶²⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 441.

⁶²¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 424.

him with offerings, singing his laudation, feeling dependence on him as a servant, making friendship with him, and surrendering oneself completely to him' (*BP* 7.5.23).⁶²² Again, the use of the word 'me' (*mām*) repeated in the verse, MS holds, indicates the qualified aspect of Lord Viṣṇu; by the phrase 'always yoked to devotion' (*bhaktyā nitya-yuktā*) in the same verse is indicated the abundance of all the spiritual disciplines and the absence of obstacles towards attaining the Lord. MS now substantiates his stance regarding the role of devotion with the support of the Śruti: 'Only in a man who has the deepest love for God, and who shows the same love toward his teacher as toward God, do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth' (*ŚU* 6.23) and that of the *YS* of Patañjali (*YS* 1.29). MS goes on to explain that in this way, having adopted the means of *śama*, *dama* etc., and also that of *śravaṇa* and *manana*, being free from all the obstacles to spiritual progress as a consequence of conveying love and salutation to the supreme Lord and the supreme teacher, and having fulfilled all the spiritual means of self-realisation, the noble-minded ones (*mahātman*-s) worship the Lord by meditating constantly on him. MS maintains that this meditation is the ultimate stage of self-realisation, i.e. profound and constant meditation (*nididhyāsana*). Thus emerges the knowledge of direct realisation of the reality in the form of 'I am *brahman*' arising from the Upaniṣadic utterances like 'That thou art'; which leads to, instead of mediate liberation (*krama-mukti*), the immediate liberation (*sākṣānmokṣa*) of the aspirant.⁶²³

So, by viewing this means of worshipping the Lord (*bhagavadupāsana*) as a fulfilment of all other spiritual disciplines and also admitting it as a cause of

⁶²² *śravaṇaṃ kīrtanaṃ viṣṇoḥ smaraṇaṃ pādasevanaṃ / arcaṇaṃ vandanaṃ dāsyam sakhyamātmanivedanam //*

⁶²³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 424-5.

eliminating all obstacles in the way of attaining the Lord, MS validates the supremacy of devotion over any other means of liberation.

It is unclear whether the commentary currently available on the *ŚU* is really made by Śaṅkara, but it is nevertheless quite consistent with his non-dualistic approach. Thus, while explaining *ŚU* 6.23 that has been quoted by MS, this commentary says that the best qualified person (*uttamādhikārin*) is one who has profound loving devotion, i.e. unadulterated (*nirūpacarita*) loving devotion characterised as steady faith (*acañcalā śraddhā*) to God who is the supreme Lord, and who is by nature impartite (*akhaṇḍa*) supreme light (*parajyotiḥ*) identical with existence-consciousness-bliss (*saccidānanda*), and who has the same loving devotion to his teacher who is the knower of *brahman* as towards God [as without the grace of the teacher it is hard to reach the knowledge of reality (*brahmavidyā*)], and who has thus speeded up (*tvarānvita*) the process. To such a person are revealed these points declared by the noble one.⁶²⁴

It may be pointed out in this connection that, though Śaṅkara has given a very precise explanation on this verse in conformity with his own doctrinal considerations, MS's detailed explanation on the same corroborates his devotional penchant. Dhanapati, however, remarks here that the views of MS may be accepted here in so far as he is not opposed to Śaṅkara, thereby hinting at a difference between the approaches of Śaṅkara and MS.⁶²⁵

MS's explanation of *BhG* 9.14 is quite similar to Rāmānuja's elucidation of the same verse. Rāmānuja says that the devotees of the Lord, having remembered his various names which indicate the particular specific traits of the Lord, by

⁶²⁴ *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* 2065 Vikram Saṁvad: *ŚUB* 6.23, pp. 249-50.

⁶²⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, pp. 424-5.

uttering the names such as Śrīrāma, Nārāyaṇa, Kṛṣṇa and Vāsudeva, with every part of their bodies thrilled (*pulakāñcita-sarvāṅga*) and voice faltering with joy (*harṣa-gadgada-kaṇṭha*), undertake utmost endeavours to serve the Lord by engaging in different activities such as worship of God (*arcanā*), building temples with gardens therein and worshipping the Lord by prostrating on the ground with a whole-hearted desire to have eternal union (*nityayoga*) with him.⁶²⁶

In this connection, reference to the *SB* of MS may be pertinent for substantiating his position. As noted earlier, MS in his *SB* has accepted two categories (*padārtha*-s), e.g. the seer (*dṛk*) and the seen (*dṛṣya*). While the former is the same as the non-dual self, the latter comprises nescience together with its effects, i.e. the empirical existence. MS adds further that because of difference made by the limiting adjunct (*upādhi*), the seer is represented as God (*īśvara*), the individual self (*jīva*), and the witnessing self (*sākṣin*). According to MS, God is *brahman* associated with nescience (*avidyā*), which has three constituents, viz. *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, each of which periodically predominates over the other two. In accordance with such prevalence, God is known as Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Rudra respectively. Besides, there are numerous incarnations, both male and female, which appear through the sport of the Lord (*līlā*) for gracing his devotees. Though MS has not proceeded with much detail on *bhakti* etc. in this connection, his commentators such as Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī etc. have elaborately discussed this issue. Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha holds that in accordance with the two senses of *bhakti* as means (*sādhana-bhakti*) and as a goal (*sādhya-bhakti*), there are two kinds of devotee: i) one who is a spiritual aspirant (*sādhaka*), ii) one who

⁶²⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 2, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 159.

has already accomplished (*siddha*) his goal. Thus, he adds that, according to the etymological derivation of *bhakti* as *bhajana*, it means *sādhya-bhakti* or *prema-bhakti*. With the support of Smṛti texts and that of one from the *BP* enumerating the nine-types of *bhakti*, he maintains that etymologically, *sādhana-bhakti* or the spiritual disciplines also means worshipping and serving the Lord, as also the modification of the inner organ assuming the form of the Lord.⁶²⁷ It may be mentioned that Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's explanation in this connection with reference to the ninefold devotion has been found explicitly in *BhR* as well.⁶²⁸ Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, too, on the basis of various Smṛti texts etc. and some verses from the *BP* text listing out the nine types of *bhakti*, maintains that devotion causes satisfaction to the Lord who is being worshipped. Brahmānanda further says that Lord Viṣṇu is the self of all the beings, and while all the beings have natural love for themselves in the sense that 'may I always be', devotion to Lord Viṣṇu is quite normal. Again, Brahmānanda refers to Viṣṇu both as qualified and unqualified.⁶²⁹

Having mentioned in the preceding verse (i.e. *BhG* 9.14) the different physical, mental and religious activities as part of worshipping him, the Lord now mentions in *BhG* 9.15 the sacrificial act that consists of knowledge (*jñāna-yajña*) which is followed by other group of devotees by taking him either as one (*eka*), or separate (*prthak*), or many (*bahu*) in meditation. MS interprets this verse by saying that being unable to practise the disciplines of *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*, the devotees, according to their qualitative differences [viz. the best (*uttama*), mediocre (*madhyama*), and the dull (*manda*)] worship the Lord through different forms of cognitive or intellectual sacrifices (*jñāna-yajña*). Those who, due to their

⁶²⁷ *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: pp. 348-66 and *Nārāyaṇī* thereon, pp. 367-8.

⁶²⁸ *Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha* 1404 Bengali Era: *Ṭīkā* on *BhR* 1.1, pp. 84-5.

⁶²⁹ *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: *Nyāratnāvalī*, p. 359 ff.

indifference to other means of realisation, worship the Lord without having any sense of difference, are the best among these types of worshippers. Thus, this kind of worship is named as *ahamgrahopāsanā*, which has its support in the Śruti: ‘O venerable Deity, I am Thou indeed; Thou art indeed me’ (*Varāha Upaniṣad* 2.34).⁶³⁰ Others who worship the Lord as a symbol (*pratīkopāsanā*)⁶³¹ on the basis of a notion of difference between the worshipped and the worshipper, are the mediocre worshippers. He quotes in this context the Śruti text: ‘*Brahman* is the sun’- that is the rule of substitution’ (*CU* 3.19.1). Again, some others, who are unable to carry out these two types of worship, undertake the worship of some minor deities, or perform some rites prescribed by scriptures, actually worship thereby the Lord himself, who is multi-formed of all form (*viśvato-mukha*) and the self of all (*sarvātmā*). These worshippers are dull as compared to other devotees. MS reiterates that in order to worship the Lord through *jñāna-yajña*, one should look upon the lower form of worship as a step that leads to the subsequent upper step, that is, the men of dull competence lead to the mediocre ones, and then the best ones.

Though Śaṅkara regards this type of worship, i.e. *jñānayajña*, as an act performed by different kinds of devotees, he differs from MS in that he does not make any explicit classification of such devotees in this connection.⁶³² Further, Śaṅkara explains the above-mentioned Śruti text (viz. *CU* 3.19.1) as meaning that, as the universe appears to be non-existent until its manifestation, and as that

⁶³⁰ Translation is from Gambhirananda 2000: p. 587.

⁶³¹ Brahma 1986: Footnote, pp. 738-9; Brahma 1988: Appendix, pp. 325-6 may also be referred to for the explanation of different kinds of *upāsanā*, viz. *pratīka-upāsanā*, *sampat-upāsanā*, *samvarga-upāsanā*, and *ahamgraha-upāsanā*.

⁶³² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 425-6.

manifestation is only made possible by the sun, the sun is eulogised to be viewed as *brahman*.⁶³³

However, Dhanapati criticises MS, because he thinks that MS's understanding of *jñāna* (i.e. the knowledge of identity between the Lord and the individual self) in question as *ahamgrahopāsanā* (i.e. worshipping oneself as equated with a deity) in a secondary sense demands critical consideration. He holds that since such a meaning may be conveyed even by admitting the primary sense of the word *jñāna*, there is no reason for admitting the secondary sense of that word, since between the primary and secondary sense of a word, it is always reasonable to accept the primary sense of a word if the situation permits it.⁶³⁴

Having kept the above discussion in mind, and with the support of a text from the *BP* where it is said by the Lord that, though *bhakti-yoga* is held to be manifold, it should be taken to be unitary in its essential nature and spirit (*BP* 3.29.7),⁶³⁵ let us now give a brief account of how *upāsanā* (i.e. meditation on or worship of a personal deity) is understood in Śaṅkara's own works.

Śaṅkara in the introduction to his commentary on the *CU* maintains that *upāsanā* consists of accepting a certain object or support as the basis of thought in accordance with the scriptures, in order to ensure the uniformity of the flow of mental modification, so that there should be nothing different that interrupts such a current of thought. Though *upāsanā* is not knowledge proper, it is nevertheless an aid to self-realisation, since it is a means for the purification of the mind.⁶³⁶ Again, though the Upaniṣadic text, 'To suffer from a sickness is surely the highest

⁶³³ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 9, p. 197 (Also see Panoli 2008: Vol. IV, p. 325).

⁶³⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, p. 426.

⁶³⁵ *Bhāgavata* 2064 Vikrama Saṁvad: p. 136.

⁶³⁶ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 9, Introduction, *CUB*, p. 9.

austerity...a man who knows this wins the highest world...be placed on the fire when one is dead is surely the highest austerity...a man who knows this wins the highest world' (*BU* 5.11), depicts sickness, death etc. as penance, and asserts the knowledge of this results in the attainment of the highest world, such *upāsanā* here does not relate either to the sacrifices or to *brahman*. Thus, there are number of Śruti texts such as 'For this alone is the syllable that's *brahman*...one knows this syllable, he obtains his very wish' (*KU* 1.2.16), 'This is the support that's best...one knows this support, he rejoices in *brahman*'s world' (*KU* 1.2.17), which talk about still higher types of *upāsanā*, i.e. *upāsanā*-s on *brahman* (*brahmopāsanā*). Śaṃkara's elucidation of these Upaniṣadic passages makes the point all the more explicit. While explaining the first verse, Śaṃkara says that this syllable (i.e. *om*) stands for both the lower and the higher *brahman*. He who worships this symbol (*pratīka*) as *brahman* attains whatever he desires, i.e. either the lower or higher *brahman*. While the higher *brahman* is known, the lower one is attained by the aspirant. On the second verse, Śaṃkara comments that the support (i.e. *om*) is the best of all supports for the realization of *brahman*. Knowing this support, one rejoices in the higher *brahman*; and being identified with the lower *brahman*, the aspirant becomes suitable to be worshipped as *brahman*. In his comments on *CU* 1.1.1 too, Śaṃkara maintains that it is understood in all the texts of Vedānta that the syllable *om* as name and image of the supreme self is the best means of its worship.⁶³⁷

In his commentary on the *BS* as well, Śaṃkara talks at some length about worship of symbol. Though, while commenting on *BS* 4.1.4, '(The aspirant) is not

⁶³⁷ Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali 1999: Vol. 8, *KUB* 1.2.16-17, pp. 164-5; vol. 9, *CUB* 1.1.1, p. 10.

to identify (himself) with a symbol, for he cannot understand himself to be so', Śaṅkara maintains that there cannot be any self identification through symbols, as one reaches *brahman* when the names etc. are left without their transformed states (as the names etc.). On the next aphorism: 'The sun etc. are to be looked upon as *brahman* because of the consequent exaltation' (BS 4.1.5), he comments that in this case *brahman* alone is thus worshipped, being superimposed on the symbol, just as much as Lord Viṣṇu is worshipped in the images etc. (being superimposed on them).⁶³⁸ Besides, *upāsanā* in general (BS 4.1.8-11) and its different kinds, e.g. *apratīkāvalambanā*, e.g. *sampad* and *adhyāsa* (BS 1.1.4), *ahaṁgraha* (BS 3.3.59); *pratīkāvalambanā* (BS 3.3.65-66); and both *apratīkāvalambanā* and *pratīkāvalambanā* (BS 4.3.16) have been dealt with by Śaṅkara in detail in his BSB on these aphorisms.

As the first line of the verse *BhG* 9.34 is repeated verbatim in *BhG* 18.65, MS's explanation on the latter also throws some light on his outlook about devotion. In his explanation of *BhG* 9.14 MS explained the phrase 'bow down to me' (*māṃ namaskuru*) that also occurs in *BhG* 18.65 as worshipping the Lord through body, mind, and speech (*kāyena vācā manasā*), that is accompanied by other acts of devoutness as observed in the Vaiṣṇava religion (*bhāgavata-dharmāṇāmupalakṣaṇam*) [such as worshipping him with offerings (*arcana*), singing his laudation (*vandana*) etc.], MS refers to the same *BP* verse that he quotes in his explanation of *BhG* 9.14, enumerating the nine types of devotion (*navavidhā-bhakti*), whose offering to the Lord [according to Prahlāda speaking to his father Hiraṇyakaśipu], is construed to be the best study of Vedānta (*BP* 7.5.23-24). MS

⁶³⁸ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: BSB on BS 4.1.4-5, pp. 940-43.

here refers the reader to his *BhR* for details, and emphasises that the devotees, after thus accomplishing all these acts of devoutness, will attain Lord Vāsudeva only after the knowledge of identity between *brahman* and the individual self (*brahmātmaikatva-jñāna*) is produced through the Upaniṣadic texts.⁶³⁹

Thus, in the *BhR*, MS's view that the knowledge of the self is indispensable for developing *bhakti* has been explained in greater length. Following the lead of the *BP*, MS enumerates eleven stages in the evolution of *bhakti*, of which the fourth, called *hari-guṇa-śruti* is the practice of the nine types of devotion (*navavidhā-bhakti*) [enumerated in the *BP* verses just mentioned] according to one's competence.⁶⁴⁰ It is also to be noted that Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, while commenting on the *SB* of MS, quotes verbatim all these three *kārikā*-s of *BhR* (i.e. *BhR* 1.33-35) of MS enumerating all these stages of devotion.⁶⁴¹ Again, as to the fact whether there is the possibility of eulogy (*stuti*), singing laudation (*vandana*) etc. in the case of the unqualified *brahman*, MS raises this question in his commentary on the *SŚ*, and replies to it in his own way. He holds that, while some scholars consider *nididhyāsana* as *stuti* of the unqualified *brahman*, and some hold the determination of its essential nature (*tatsvarūpa-nirūpaṇa*) to be *stuti*,⁶⁴² MS -- following the assertion of Padmapādācārya in his *Pañcapādikā*: 'Bliss, awareness of objects as well as eternity are the properties (of *brahman*)' [*ānando viṣayānubhavo nityatvaṃ ceti santi dharmāḥ*] -- asserts that, since there can be no eulogy without assigning attributes (*dharma*), *stuti* in its primary sense of the description of merits is possible

⁶³⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 751.

⁶⁴⁰ Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.32-35 and the author's annotation thereon, pp. 67, 82, 67-99 ff.

⁶⁴¹ *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: *Nārāyaṇī*, p. 370.

⁶⁴² Here MS refers to another commentary on the same, namely the *Anvayārthaprakāśikā* by Rāmatīrtha (compare Giri 2007: Vol. 1, *SŚSS* of MS on *SŚ* 1.1, p. 10 and *Saṃkṣepaśārīraka* 1992: p. 4, lines 7-8).

even in the case of the unqualified *brahman*, when the imaginary merits such as reality/existence (*satyatva*) etc. are taken into consideration.⁶⁴³

Śaṅkara is more precise in his comments on the same verse of the *BhG*, where he says that by ‘bow down to me’ is meant ‘bow down to me alone’, and that by surrendering all the ends, means, and purposes (*sarva-samarpita-sādhyasādhana-prayojana*), the devotee attains the Lord only by bearing in mind that for anybody who has thus surrendered to the Lord, the fruit of liberation (*mokṣa-phala*) is certainly to follow. He thereby expresses his absolutist view.⁶⁴⁴

Further, with the support of Śaṅkara’s own explanation, we can substantiate the steps of *navavidhā-bhakti* of the *BP* as cited by MS above. Thus, the step of eulogy (*stuti*) and salutation (*vandana*) finds clear support in one passage in his comments on *TU* 1.1.1, where Śaṅkara maintains that one who is eager to attain the knowledge of *brahman* must offer obeisance (*namaskāra*) to Vāyu (who is here regarded as *brahman*) for removing the obstacles in the way of the knowledge of *brahman*. Regarding *dāśya-bhakti*, we find another passage in his comments on *BU* 3.8.9. Śaṅkara explains that, since service is an act, and sacrifices, gift, offering of oblations etc. are equally acts; the result of service is seen accruing from those to whom it is intended.⁶⁴⁵ Śaṅkara’s elucidation on the concluding *mantra* of the *ĪU* (i.e. *ĪU* 18) brings forth *pādasevā* and *vandana-bhakti*. In one point, the said elucidation goes on like praying to Agni to lead along the auspicious path to get rid of the southern solstice (*dakṣiṇa-mārga*) characterised by incessant going and returning. Thus, being dejected with this path (of incessant going and returning), the aspirant begs the Lord again to lead him along the

⁶⁴³ Giri 2007: Vol. 1, SSSS of MS on SŚ 1.1, pp. 10-1 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 198-9).

⁶⁴⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 751.

⁶⁴⁵ *Śrīśāṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, *TUB* 1.1.1, p. 616; Vol. 10, *BUB* 3.8.9, p. 449.

auspicious path, which is devoid of going and returning. But the aspirant is not able to render any service (*paricaryā*) to the Lord now, and so he only offers many words of adoration (*namaskāra-vacanam*) to the Lord with a view to serving him (i.e. the Lord) with adoration, that is, by bowing down to him (i.e. the Lord). Again, complete surrender of oneself to the Lord (*ātma-nivedana*) is echoed in Śaṅkara's comments on *MU* 3.2.3 where it is said that aspiration after the self-realisation with the renunciation of every other thing is the only means of attaining the self.⁶⁴⁶

In addition to the above remarks of Śaṅkara, the view of one of the well-known commentators of *MS* (i.e. Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, 18th century CE) may be mentioned to show the admission of devotion as service (*sevā-bhakti*) to the Lord in the Advaita Vedānta. Thus, in his *Bhakticandrikā*, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha maintains, with the support of the *BS* text 'That (is Brahman) from which (are derived) the birth etc. of this (universe)' [*BS* 1.1.2], that *brahman* as the creator or God has to be served as a master (i.e. *brahman* needs to be served because of his being the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of this universe). Again, he asserts clearly that the knowledge of non-duality (i.e. the knowledge of identity between *brahman* and the individual self) is by no means an hindrance in the way of loving devotion.⁶⁴⁷

Apart from the primary sense of *bhakti* mentioned above, the *ŚBhS* also points out its secondary sense: 'Since worshipping the Lord (*bhajana*) has been recapitulated by the word 'loving devotion' (*bhakti*), it (i.e. loving devotion) needs to be understood there in the secondary sense, as secondary devotion (*gauṇī-bhakti*) is the cause of primary devotion (*parā-bhakti*)' [*bhakti*]

⁶⁴⁶ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, *ĪUB* 18, pp 25-6; *MUB* 3.2.3, p. 381 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 104-5 for all these Upaniṣadic references).

⁶⁴⁷ *Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra* 1998: *Bhakticandrikā*, pp. 23-4.

bhajanopasaṃhārādgauṇyā parāyai taddhetutvāt, ŚBhS 2.2.1]. While explaining this aphorism, Svapneśvara (ca. 15th century CE), having referred to the *BhG* as the work that talks about the highest or primary devotion (in *BhG* 7, *BhG* 9.13 etc.) and worshipping the Lord with devotion (in *BhG* 7.17, 9.14, 9.29 etc.), maintains that the word *bhakti* has been employed in this context in the sense of devotion to the Lord (*bhagavadbhakti*). Both *bhakti* and *bhajana* convey the same meaning (both of them being derived from the root *bhaja*). Svapneśvara continues by saying that, when singing the praise of the Lord (*kīrtana*) etc. (as referred to in *BP* 7.5.23) are said to be the means of acquiring devotion (*bhakti*), the word *bhakti* is used in a secondary sense, and not in the direct sense (*śakyārtha*), just as ‘clarified butter is called life itself’ (*āyurvai ghṛtam*, *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 2.3.2) is a secondary usage,⁶⁴⁸ since by eating clarified butter, life becomes longer. The devotional acts, like listening to the glories of the Lord etc., are deemed secondary, as they help the devotee to get rid of impurities, making him ready for obtaining the grace of the Lord and forming passionate love for the Lord, which results in acquiring the highest love for the Lord, which is the primary sense of the term ‘devotion’. Here, the devotee gets absorbed in the Lord, where all his empirical considerations disappear.⁶⁴⁹ In his commentary on the ŚBhS, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, after referring to the commentary of Svapneśvara and the *BP* verse enumerating the nine types of *bhakti* (i.e. *BP* 7.5.23), and drawing greatly upon MS’s *BhR*, also mentions that, just as a plough, being a means of livelihood as a help for producing crops, is said to be life itself in a secondary sense, so worshipping the Lord by way of listening to the glory

⁶⁴⁸ Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra 1998: *Parīṣiṣṭam* 1, *Svapneśvarabhāṣya*, pp. 30-1 (Also see Harshananda 2002: pp. 106-10).

⁶⁴⁹ See Gupta 2006: p. 121.

of the Lord, singing the praise of him etc. (*śravaṇa-kīrtanādi*), being the means of attaining devotion, is said to be devotion in a secondary sense.⁶⁵⁰

Now, in view of the above-mentioned remarks of Svapneśvara and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha respectively, we may recall here that, while explaining *BhG* 9.14, 18.65 etc., MS has substantiated his views with the support of the same *BP* text, in order to convey that all these nine types of *bhakti* lead to the attainment of the highest devotion (*parā-bhakti*), thereby admitting the former as a help for attaining the latter. Again, in his *BhR*, MS describes devotion to be the highest end of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*), where he has employed the simile of plough, which has been adopted later by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha as well. With the support of the *BP* verses (i.e. *BP* 11.20.31-36) etc., MS holds that it is the unanimously accepted view of all systems (*sarva-tantra-siddhānta*) that bliss that is ever unmixed with misery is only the highest end of human life. Just as a plough is called life in a figurative sense, so the statement that declares righteousness (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), desire (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*) as the four ends of human life is to be viewed figuratively [i.e. all these four are regarded as the ends of human life, since they are the means of attaining the highest end of human life, i.e. the highest devotion]. MS adds that, as the knowers of Vedānta hold liberation, which is by nature the supreme bliss, to be the end of human life, and not as the absence of misery, the path of devotion to the Lord (*bhagavadbhakti-yoga*) is also the highest end of human life, since it is pure bliss unmixed with misery.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵⁰ *Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra* 1998: *Bhakticandrikā*, pp. 116-7 ff.

⁶⁵¹ Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: Author's annotations 5, 6, 8 etc. on the benedictory verse, pp. 5-8 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: p. 875, Nelson 1986: pp. 244 and 246).

The claim that *bhakti-yoga* is held by MS in his *BhR* to be the highest end of human life is also admitted by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha in his *Bhakticandrikā*.⁶⁵² Again, while commenting on the *SB* of MS, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha maintains that despite its being neither bliss nor the absence of suffering, there is no fault in accepting *bhakti* to be the end of human life, just as in the case of cessation of nescience, bliss is implied as the delimiting factor (*avacchedaka*).⁶⁵³

Regarding the classification of *bhakti*, we do not find any elaborate discussion of MS in his *GD*, barring his remark in one of the introductory verses (i.e. no. 7) that *bhakti* is of three types-- mixed with rites and duties (*karma-miśrā*), pure (*śuddhā*) and mixed with knowledge (*jñāna-miśrā*). As we have already mentioned, MS may have been influenced by the theistic Vaiṣṇavas while making this classification, and for that, we find Viśvanātha Cakravartin, a later exponent of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, mentioning this classification almost in the same manner in his own commentary on the *BhG* that is later than the *GD*.⁶⁵⁴ Besides, as noted before, MS has dealt with this subject in detail in his *BhR*. Therefore, a little more discussion on it may be pertinent.

It is assumed by some scholars that MS might have been aware of the treatment of *bhakti* in the *Muktāphala* of Vopadeva (13th century CE, and also the author of the *Harilīlamṛta*, a summary of the *BP*, on which MS has written a commentary) and its commentary by Hemādri, called the *Kaivalyadīpikā*.⁶⁵⁵ In this connection, the view of Adya Prasad Mishra, a modern scholar of repute on the subject, may be taken into consideration. Mishra maintains that, according to

⁶⁵² Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra 1998: *Bhakticandrikā* on ŚBhS 2.2.23, p. 164 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 232-3).

⁶⁵³ Siddhāntabindu 1989: *Nārāyaṇī*, pp. 367-8 ff.

⁶⁵⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not known): *Sārāthavarṣiṇī*, pp. 2, 206-7.

⁶⁵⁵ See Gupta 2006: p. 120 and Mishra 2009: p. 78.

Vopadeva's exposition of the *BP*, *bhakti* is twofold, i.e. *vihitā* and *avihitā*. Further, *vihita-bhakti* is of two types, i.e. mixed (*miśrā*) and pure (*śuddhā*). While the former is mixed with either *karma* or *jñāna* or both of them, the latter is mixed with neither *karma* nor *jñāna* nor both of them, thereby giving rise to the three types of *miśra-bhakti*, e.g. *karma-miśrā*, *karma-jñāna-miśrā*, and *jñāna-miśrā*. While *vihita-bhakti* is of fourteen types [i.e. *śuddhā*, *miśrā* (*jñāna-miśrā* or *nirguṇa*, *karma-jñāna-miśrā*, *karma-miśrā*), *karma-jñāna-miśrā* (*uttamā*, *madhyamā*, *adhamā*), *karma-miśrā* (*sāttvika*, *rājasika*, *tāmasika*), *sāttvika* (*karma-kṣayarthā*, *viṣṇu-prītyarthā*, *vidhi-siddhyarthā*), *rājasika* (*viṣayāarthā*, *yaśo'rthā*, *aiśvaryāarthā*), *tāmasika* (*hiṃsāarthā*, *dambhāarthā*, *mātsaryāarthā*)], *avihita-bhakti* is of four types, i.e. *kāmajā*, *dveṣajā*, *bhayajā*, and *snehajā*, thereby making the total number of *bhakti* to become eighteen. Mishra reiterates the view that while Vopadeva and his commentator Hemādri enumerate eighteen types of *bhakti*,⁶⁵⁶ MS,⁶⁵⁷ Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, and the author of the *Bhaktimīmāṃsā*⁶⁵⁸ accept only the first fourteen types of *bhakti*, giving up *avihita-bhakti* all together.⁶⁵⁹ The reason why MS seems to have differed from Vopadeva lies, Mishra holds, in their understanding of the very nature of *bhakti*. For both Vopadeva and MS, the *BP* is authoritative, yet while the former considers *bhakti* to be the absorption of the mind to the Lord by any means whatsoever, the latter views the melting of the mind to be the essential constituent of *bhakti*.⁶⁶⁰

While rejecting *dveṣajā* and *bhayajā bhakti* in the group of *avihita-bhakti*, MS seems to be in agreement with the *ŚBhS*, where the author terms *bhakti* as

⁶⁵⁶ *Muktaphala* 1920: Chapter 5, *Viṣṇubhaktiprakaraṇa* with the commentary of Hemādri, pp. 64-72.

⁶⁵⁷ See Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 2, pp. 101-41 ff.

⁶⁵⁸ *Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra* 1998: *Pariśiṣṭam* 2.3, *Bhaktimīmāṃsā* 2.1.3-2.2.8, pp. 82-3.

⁶⁵⁹ See Mishra 2009: pp. 28-9, 75-81.

⁶⁶⁰ *Muktaphala* 1920: Chapter 5, *Viṣṇubhaktiprakaraṇa*, verse 1, p. 63 and Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.3 and author's comments thereon, pp. 18-20 (Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 230-1,

‘Devotion is by nature affection or attachment (*rāga*), because of its being opposed to aversion (*dveṣa*) and also being something to which the word ‘sentiment’ (*rasa*) is applied (*dveṣapratipakṣabhāvādrasaśabdācca rāgaḥ*, *ŚBhS* 1.1.6). While commenting on this aphorism, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha quotes from the *VP* and *BP* as the authority, and denies the authenticity of *dveṣajā* and *bhayajā bhakti*;⁶⁶¹ thereby accepting the remaining two kinds of *avihita-bhakti*, i.e. *kāmajā* and *snehajā*.⁶⁶² But it is interesting to note that, while commenting on the *SB* of *MS*, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha seems to be in complete agreement with Vopadeva in classifying *bhakti* into *vihitā* and *avihitā* together with their subsections, with the sole exception that he does not refer to *śuddha-bhakti* as one of the four types of *vihita-bhakti*. Again, though Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha classifies *vihita-bhakti* into *karma-miśrā*, *karma-jñāna-miśrā*, and *jñāna-miśrā* (leaving out *śuddha-bhakti* from Vopadeva’s classification of it) both in his commentary on the *ŚBhS* (i.e. the *Bhakticandrikā*)⁶⁶³ and that on the *SB* of *MS*, he expresses a contrary view in the *Bhakticandrikā*, while he refers to *śuddha* type of *vihita-bhakti* in the same place of the *SB* in connection with explaining the various types of eligible aspirants adopting different types of *vihita-bhakti*.⁶⁶⁴

In order to give a probable explanation of this apparent contradiction, Mishra says that here, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, in line with *MS*, views *śuddha/prema/nirguṇa-bhakti* as similar to *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* at the ultimate stage. That is why we find that the verse of the *BP* quoted by *MS* while explaining the

⁶⁶¹ Besides in *BhR* 2.29 etc., *MS* explains in his *GD* as to why they are not be treated as *bhakti*. In his comments on *BhG* 7.16, he mentions that despite the fact that Kāṁsa, Śiśupāla etc. thought of Kṛṣṇa constantly out of their horror and enmity to the Lord, they were not devotees due to their lack of love to him (See Sāṁkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: p. 117 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 363).

⁶⁶² *Śāṇḍilyabhaktisūtra* 1998: *Bhakticandrikā*, p. 47 ff.

⁶⁶³ Cf. Mishra 2009: p. 232.

⁶⁶⁴ *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: *Nārāyaṇī*, p. 368 ff.

unqualified nature of *bhakti* (i.e. *nirguṇa* or *śuddha-bhakti*) in his *BhR* has also been quoted by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha in explaining *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* in the *SB*.⁶⁶⁵ Furthermore, the idea becomes more explicit when Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, in the course of explaining the same verses in his commentary on the *SB* of MS, mentions that it is the *nirguṇauna-bhakti* that is the greatest means of attaining Lord Viṣṇu.⁶⁶⁶ We have also seen that MS in numerous places of his *GD* regards *śuddha-bhakta*-s as *jñānī-bhakta*-s (e.g. *BhG* 7.16-17 etc.).⁶⁶⁷

Thus, we may conclude that MS's tripartite classification of *bhakti* as *karma-miśrā*, *śuddhā*, and *jñāna-miśrā* in his *GD* is not in disagreement with that of Vopadeva, as the additional *karma-jñāna-miśrā* type of *bhakti* (of Vopadeva) may very well be interpreted in terms of *karma-miśrā* and *jñāna-miśrā bhakti* (of MS). What Vopadeva and later Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha etc. have meant by *śuddha-bhakti* has been termed clearly *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* by MS. The fact that the *ŚBhS* too had some influence on MS in this context is also conspicuous.

In the same way, as found earlier, for showing the need of *sādhana-bhakti* for attaining self-realisation, MS reiterates in his *VKL* that the grace of the Lord of the Blue Mountain is as useful as the Advaitic inner disciplines of *śravaṇa* (of which *śama*, *dama* etc. are also constituents), *manana*, *nididhyāsana* etc. for obtaining liberation through the cessation of nescience and its effects (i.e. all sufferings in the form of empirical existence).⁶⁶⁸ Again, MS's bold assertion elsewhere in the same work that there should be no divergent opinion in accepting the view that the devotee, getting his intuitive eyes (*jñāna-caṅkṣu*) purified through

⁶⁶⁵ Compare Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: p. 20 with *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: Nārāyaṇī, p. 369.

⁶⁶⁶ *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: *Nyāratnāvalī*, pp. 364-5.

⁶⁶⁷ See Mishra 2009: pp. 232-3.

⁶⁶⁸ Karmarkar 1962: pp. 10-5 ff.

the eye-salve in the form of devotion to the Lord of the Blue Mountain (*bhagavato nīlācala-nāthasya bhajanāñjana-nirmalīkṛta-jñāna-cakṣuḥ*), experiences the cessation of nescience by the means of perception, substantiates MS's attempt to bring together the basic tenets of the Advaita Vedānta with his own view regarding devotion.⁶⁶⁹ The same idea is stated in no uncertain terms in his *GD* where he states that the *jīvanmukta*-s, being purified through the asceticism of knowledge (*jñāna-tapasā*), develop a loving attitude, which is otherwise known as pleasure of love (*rati*) or love (*prema*), towards the Lord.⁶⁷⁰

Regarding the precise definition of *bhakti* given by MS both in his *GD* on *BhG* 4.10 and *BhR*, we find that for MS, devotion means the inmost passionate yearning for and attachment to Lord Vāsudeva, and that it is a mental modification.⁶⁷¹ Though in the course of admitting the nine types of *bhakti* mentioned in the *BP* etc., MS talks about *sādhana-bhakti*, which is instrumental in causing *bhakti* proper [i.e. devotion as an object to be achieved by the devotee (*sādhya-bhakti*)], and which has considerable bearing on the theology of the Gauḍīya (i.e. Bengal) Vaiṣṇavism prevailing at his time, MS remains a diehard non-dualist in his approach by aiming at obtaining the knowledge of identity of *brahman* and the individual self, rather than seeking *sādhya-bhakti* alone as a theist would do. Besides, the two important things derived from MS's definition of *bhakti* in *BhR* 1.3, viz. i) liquefaction or melting (*dravībhāva*) of the mind of the devotee due to observance of the spiritual discipline of the Lord (*bhagavaddharma*) like *śravaṇa*

⁶⁶⁹ Karmarkar 1962: p. 123.

⁶⁷⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 193.

⁶⁷¹ As noted earlier, in the *GD* on *BhG* 13.10, he holds in agreement with Śaṅkara that devotion is the love for the supreme lord Vāsudeva, that is preceded by the knowledge that Lord Vāsudeva is the most excellent (*bhagavati Vāsudeve parameśvare bhaktiḥ sarvotkṛṣṭatva-jñāna-pūrvikā-prītiḥ*); and in *BhR* 1.3, he states that devotion is a mental modification in the form of the Lord (*bhagavadākāra-citta-vṛtti*) caused by the listening to the glories of the Lord etc.

etc., ii) *bhakti* consisting in a continuous flow of the mental modification of the mind that has assumed the form of the Lord — happen to be important elements in the *rasa* (i.e. the supreme delight) theology propagated by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and the *bhakti-yoga* initiated by Rāmānuja⁶⁷² that was followed extensively by the later Vaiṣṇava theologians, are admitted by MS in his *GD*.⁶⁷³

As we have seen, the two famous *bhakti-sūtra*-s, i.e. the *ŚBhS* and *NBhS* also refer to *bhakti* as i) acts of *bhakti* (i.e. *sādhana-bhakti*) and ii) the knowledge of celestial love, which is the end to be attained by the devotee (i.e. *sādhya-bhakti*). Besides, as both the sects of Caitanya propagated by Rūpa Gosvāmin etc. (16th century CE) and of Vallabhācārya (1479 CE, the exponent of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta school) drew heavily upon the *BP*, and, dealing extensively with the religious practices or *sādhana-bhakti*, developed the theory of rapturous *bhakti*, some scholars, such as Sanjukta Gupta, find an affinity between MS's treatment of *bhakti* and that of these two schools. Further, Gupta thinks that MS's method of exposition, especially his treatment of sentiment (*rasa*) and *bhakti-rasa* in particular, is nearer to that of Vallabha than to that of Caitanya.⁶⁷⁴

In another context, the Lord again says that, though he is the same (*sama*) to everybody, those who worship him with devotion live in him and he in them (*BhG* 9.29). MS's non-dualistic approach is also explicit in his explanation of this statement. According to him, after the dedication of all actions to the Lord, the minds of the devotees have become very transparent due to prevalence of *sattva* therein and the removal of impurity of all *rajas* and *tamas* therefrom, and they exist

⁶⁷² Cf. Gupta 2006: p. 125 (Also see *Brahmasūtra* 1989: Rāmānuja's comments on *BS* 1.1.1, vol. 1, pp. 3-100; on *BS* 4.1.1, vol. 2, pp. 570-71).

⁶⁷³ For details, see Gupta 2006: p. 125 ff.

⁶⁷⁴ Gupta Gombrich 1991: p. 237.

in the Lord by virtue of acquiring the mental mode in his (i.e. the Lord's) form on the basis of the Upaniṣadic authority. So, the Lord too exists in them after being reflected in their absolute pure (*atisvaccha*) mental mode (*cittavṛtti*).⁶⁷⁵ This is a view which has been prominently discussed in his *BhR*, which we will take up in the following section.

5.2.2.3. Complete surrender of one's self to the Lord (*prapatti*) as an aid to *bhakti-yoga*

In conjunction with *bhakti-yoga* as a means of attaining liberation, the *BhG* talks about *śaraṇāgati* or *prapatti* (complete surrender of one's self to the Lord) as an aid to that means. Having by nature a universal appeal, *prapatti* facilitates the removal of obstacles that may crop up in the path of *bhakti-yoga*. *Prapatti* forms the spirit of devotion necessary to obtain the grace of the Lord.⁶⁷⁶ We find a couple of verses in the *BhG* where the Lord advises Arjuna to surrender completely to him and also to take refuge in him, so that the Lord himself takes care of him. Here, Arjuna is the representative of his devotees.

Having thus shown the importance of *bhakti-yoga* as a means of attaining liberation throughout the text, in the concluding chapter of the *BhG* (i.e. *BhG* 18) the Lord again advises Arjuna to take shelter in him only after abandoning all sorts of righteousness and tells him that he will release him from all sins that he (i.e. Arjuna) might have committed. He thereby emphasizes the need of one's total surrender to the Lord for attaining liberation. The pertinent verse reads: 'Abandoning all rites and duties, take refuge in me only. I will liberate you from all

⁶⁷⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 437.

⁶⁷⁶ Panigrahi 2006; p. 199 ff.

sins, do not grieve' (*BhG* 18.66).⁶⁷⁷ MS's detailed explanation of this verse is noteworthy, when compared with that of Śaṅkara. Some discussion of these two interpretations helps us in understanding the respective philosophical attitudes of these two eminent figures.

MS maintains that when the *BP* speaks of taking refuge in the Lord, the employment of the word 'all' indicates abandonment of rites and duties (*dharma*) without any exception -- irrespective of whether they are caste-duties (*varṇa-dharma*) or the duties of the stations of life (*āśrama-dharma*) or the duties of a general nature (*sāmānya-dharma*), or whether they are the duties that are being carried out (*vidyamāṇa/kriyamāṇa*) or those that are to be performed (*avidyamāṇa/kariṣyamāṇa*). Having abandoned all such rites and duties, the devotee should take refuge in the Lord, who is the one without second (*advitīya*), who superintends all our rites and duties, and who is the sole arbiter of their results (*sarva-dharmāṇāmadhiṣṭhātāraṃ phaladātāraṃ ca*). With the firm conviction that he will succeed through sheer grace of the Lord alone, the devotee should worship with incessant thinking (*anukṣaṇa-bhāvanā*) about Lord Vāsudeva, who is the embodiment of the amalgamation of supreme bliss and infinity (*paramānanda-ghana-mūrtimanantam*). The idea is that he should constantly think of the Lord with an excessive love (*prema-prakarṣa*) that is preceded by the idea that the Lord is the highest reality and that there is nothing outside him. Such a mental modification is bereft of all ideas about the non-self, and is like a continuous flow of oil (*taila-dhārāvadaṇḍavichhinna*).

⁶⁷⁷ Translation is our own.

MS says further that the phrase ‘abandoning all *dharma-s*’ (*sarva-dharmān parityājya*) in the verse does not enjoin renunciation of actions. Rather, what is directed here for all the stations of life [e.g. student (*brahmacārin*), house-holder (*gṛhastha*), forest-dweller (*vānaprastha*), and renunciate (*saṃnyāsin*)] is that they should surrender themselves completely to the Lord (*bhagavadeka-śaraṇatā-mātra*) after disregarding (*anādara*) actions, even if they are directed. MS holds that the phrase ‘abandoning all *dharma-s*’ does not mean abandoning all righteous and unrighteous actions, as this fact is already known from the scriptures endorsing renunciation (*saṃnyāsa-śāstra*) and the scriptures asserting prohibition (*pratiṣedha-śāstra*) respectively.⁶⁷⁸ This phrase is also not to be treated simply as an expression that endorses renunciation (*saṃnyāsa-vidhāyaka-vacana*), as what is intended to be directed here is surrendering oneself completely to the Lord. Thus, it is to be taken as a mere reiteration, because the phrase in question is neither an injunctive sentence (*vidhi-vākya*) nor one that proclaims renunciation; while the acceptance of both these senses of it leads to a defect known as ‘sentential split’ (*vākya-bheda*).⁶⁷⁹ Besides, having viewed it as the reiteration of ‘abandoning all righteousness and unrighteousness’, the assertion ‘complete surrender to the Lord’ has to be meant by the later phrase of the verse ‘seek me alone for refuge’ (*māmekam śaraṇam vraja*); thereby asserting that here ‘renunciation of *dharma*’ is not intended to be meant by

⁶⁷⁸ While *saṃnyāsa-śāstra* talks about abandoning righteousness/actions that are enjoined by the scriptures, *pratiṣedha-śāstra* prohibits the performance of unrighteous actions, i.e. actions that are prohibited by the scriptures.

⁶⁷⁹ In *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 2.1.46, Jaimini has stated that a sentence consists of words that combine to express a single meaning (*arthaiikatvadekam vākyaṃ*) [*Mīmāṃsādarśana* 1984-86: Vol. 2, p. 521]. Hence, if a single sentence is interpreted in a manner that can yield two meanings, then in order to express these two meanings, the single sentence has to be reduced to two sentences, thus affecting its unity. This is known as the defect called ‘sentential split’ (*vākya-bheda*).

the phrase ‘abandoning all *dharma*-s’. *BhG* 18.66 has been admitted as the concluding statement of the *BhG* scripture as it maintains ‘surrender to the Lord’ to be its final teaching. Without this surrender to the Lord, even renunciation does not fructify [i.e. renunciation does not give rise to its result (i.e. liberation)].

In this connection, Baccā Jhā’s observation on MS’s explanation on the expression ‘having abandoned’ (*parityajya*) may be mentioned. Baccā Jhā holds that MS explains the expression *parityajya* in such a circuitous way because of the fact that, in the previous chapters, the performance of prescribed action without any desire for fruits has been highly extolled; if they are now held to be something dispensable (i.e. something that should be totally abandoned), then it would lead to inconsistency. Further, Jhā explicates the expression *madeka-śaraṇatā* (i.e. taking refuge in the Lord only) in the context as the continuous flow of the modifications of the mind (*nirantara-vṛtti-pravāha*) in the form of non-dual pure consciousness (*advitīya-śuddha-cid-rūpa*) that arises after the removal of distraction (*vikṣepa*), which is again caused by renunciation of all actions by the internal organ, i.e. mind, that has already been purified by the performance of *nitya-naimittika-karma*-s.⁶⁸⁰

MS adds that, since Arjuna, being a *kṣatriya*, is not qualified for embracing renunciation, it is irrational for the Lord to advise him about renunciation. If it is held that the Lord is talking about renunciation in general by holding Arjuna as the representative, it does not seem appropriate to place the introductory and concluding statements: ‘...I shall tell it for your own good’ (*BhG* 18.64) and ‘...I will liberate you from all sins, do not grieve’ (*BhG* 18.66). Thus, in this context, only complete surrender to the Lord has been upheld by the Lord, with a sense of

⁶⁸⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Gūḍhārthatattvālokaḥ*, p. 160.

ignoring the duties of renunciation (*saṁnyāsa-dharma*). In connection with this, as also while explaining the Lord's contention that he will absolve his devotees unconditionally of all sins (i.e. without the performance of any atonement for committing sins), provided the devotees totally surrender to him, MS refers to Śaṁkara, who, he says, has established this point in greater detail after refuting the rival views.

MS now gives concrete details of this concept of 'surrender to the Lord' (*bhagavaccharaṇatva*) embedded in the *BhG* by mentioning that depending on the ripeness of spiritual practice (*sādhana-bhyāsa*), such surrender may be of three types: (i) I am his alone (*tasyaivāham*), (ii) He is mine alone (*mamaivāsau*), and (iii) He and myself are non-different (*sa evāham*). In the *GD*, MS has referred the reader to his *BhR* where the detailed treatment of all these types of surrender to the Lord has been made.⁶⁸¹ In order to substantiate that all these three types of *bhagavaccharaṇatā* can be traced to different theistic Vaiṣṇavite sources, MS now quotes concrete examples of them from their respective sources. The first one, MS maintains, is of a placid form (*mṛdu*), as expressed in, 'O Lord! Even if the sense of differentiation withers away, I am yours, and not you mine; as the wave belongs to the sea, and certainly not the sea to the wave' (*Viṣṇuṣaṭpadī* 3, a *stotra* believed to have been composed by Śaṁkara).⁶⁸² The second one is somewhat stronger (*madhyama*), as in, 'O Lord Kṛṣṇa! It is not surprising that you are walking away by forcibly throwing aside my hands! But I will deem it your valour if you can go out my heart' (*Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛtam* 3.96 of Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura or Līlāśuka, ca. 14th

⁶⁸¹ Sāṁkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 2.60-70, pp. 132-6.

⁶⁸² *satyapi bhedaṇagame nātha tavāhaṇi na māmakīnastvam / sāmudro hi taraṅgaḥ kkaṇa samudro na taraṅgaḥ* // (*Śrīśaṁkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 1, *Ṣaṭpadīstotram*, p. 379).

century CE).⁶⁸³ The third one is the most intense (*adhimātram*), as is spoken of by the king of death (Yama) to his messenger (*dūta*), ‘Go away from a distance from those who hold the firm conviction residing in their hearts that all these worldly phenomena and they themselves are non-different from Lord Vāsudeva, and that that supreme person, the supreme Lord, is one (i.e. identical)’ [VP 3.7.32].⁶⁸⁴ MS holds that devotees like Ambarīṣa, Prahlāda, *gopī*-s etc. may be placed under this third category.⁶⁸⁵ It may be noted in this connection that while commenting on the *SB* of MS, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī refers to the above-mentioned three types of surrender to the Lord along with the verse of the *BhG* in question (i.e. *BhG* 18.66), and elaborates them respectively. Brahmānanda holds that the result of devotion (*bhakti*) in the sense of loving devotion (*prema*) is surrendering oneself to the Lord (*ātma-nivedana*). By the first type of surrendering to the Lord as ‘I am his alone’ is meant remembrance of Lord Viṣṇu. The second type as ‘He is mine only’ brings forth from the cessation of difference in respect of other beings due to the abundance of love for the Lord (*premātiśaya*). Regarding the third and last type, ‘He and I are non-different’, Brahmānanda adds, the sense that Lord Viṣṇu as existence, consciousness, and bliss is by nature loving devotion, while the idea of difference between the worshipped (*sevyā*), worshipper (*sevaka*) etc. is obliterated.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸³ *hastamutkṣiapyā yāto’si balātkṛṣṇa kimadbhutam / hṛdayādyadi niryāsi pauruṣaṁ gaṇayāmi te //*

⁶⁸⁴ *sakalamidamahaṇi ca vāsudevaḥ paramapumānparameśvaraḥ sa ekaḥ / iti matiracalā bhavṛtananteh ṛdayagate vraja tānvihāya dūrāt //*

⁶⁸⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 854.

⁶⁸⁶ *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: *Nyāyaratnāvalī*, pp. 365-6.

MS asserts that the three types of steadfastness (*niṣṭhā*) in the form of goal (*sādhya*) and the means of its attainment (*sādhana*) have been spoken of in the *BhG* in clear terms. Among them, while the steadfastness in action (*karma-niṣṭhā*) as having its utility until the renunciation of all actions (*sarva-karma-saṁnyāsa*) has been expressed in the statement ‘He finds it by honouring, through the fulfilment of his own task, him who motivates the creatures to act, on whom all this is strung’ (*BhG* 18.46); the steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*), coupled with the perfection in listening to the Vedāntic scriptures etc. which are preceded by renunciation, is conveyed in the statement ‘Through this *bhakti* he recognises me for who I am and understands how great I really am, and by virtue of his true knowledge he enters me at once’ (*BhG* 18.55); the steadfastness in devotion to God (*bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā*), being the means to and result of both *karma-niṣṭhā* and *jñāna-niṣṭhā*, has been expressed at the end in the statement ‘Abandoning all rites and duties, take refuge in me only. I will liberate you from all sins, do not grieve’ (*BhG* 18.66). However, the revered commentator Śaṁkara maintains that by tagging ‘renunciation of all actions’ (*sarva-karma-saṁnyāsa*) to the phrase ‘relinquishing all *dharma*-s’, steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*) has been summed up in the phrase ‘seek me alone for refuge’ (in *BhG* 18.66). With much humility, MS now expresses his difference with Śaṁkara, when he describes himself as a pitiable (*varāka*) person who is unable to explain the intent of the Lord in this context. While MS has described the expression as conveying surrender to the Lord, Śaṁkara maintains that it expresses renunciation. Thus, in order to

express his view with mildness, MS has described himself as an insignificant person who is unable to grasp the intent of the Lord.⁶⁸⁷

As indicated by MS himself, while explaining the verse under discussion (i.e. *BhG* 18.66), Śaṅkara's interpretation seems conspicuously different from that of MS. Unlike MS, Śaṅkara explains this verse by stating that after the renunciation of all *dharma*-s that comprise the performance of prescribed deeds as well as the performance of prohibited actions [so that the idea 'freedom from all actions' (*naiṣkarmya*) can be properly conveyed], one needs to take refuge in the Lord alone, conceived as the self of all, the same in all, dwelling in all beings, the Lord, indestructible, free from being conceived as a foetus in the womb, birth, old age, and death (*garbha-janma-jarā-maraṇa-vivarjita*). In so doing, the aspirant must have the conviction that he himself is verily the Lord and that there is nothing else except the Lord. Pointing out a few verses in the *BhG* conveying both the means of knowledge (*BhG* 13.12, 18.55 etc.) and action (*BhG* 2.47, 4.15 etc.) as the suitable means of attaining the supreme good or liberation (*mokṣa*), Śaṅkara, after anticipating the possible objections of the opponent as to which among them — knowledge, or action, or the combination of both -- should be the means for its attainment, adds that only the knowledge of the self (*ātma-jñāna*) is the cause of the highest good (*niḥśreyasa*) because, after dispelling the sense of difference (*bheda-pratyaya*), it culminates in liberation or emancipation (*kaivalya*). As the sense of difference, consisting in action, its agent, and its result (*kriyā-kāraka-phala-bheda-buddhi*), is ever prevalent in the self due to nescience or ignorance (*avidyā*) which

⁶⁸⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyaṅkyā*, pp. 752-5.

has been at work in time without beginning (*anādi-kāla*), and as the knowledge of the self dispels nescience that propels one to engage in action with the awareness of multiplicity, the way of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*) is the only means of attaining liberation, ruling out the other two alternatives, viz. the means of action (*karma-mārga*) and that of the combination of action and knowledge (*jñāna-karma-samuccaya-mārga*). Though liberation, being an eternal entity (*nitya-vastu*) and not a product (*akārya*), is not produced either through action or through knowledge, knowledge alone is the means of attaining the highest good or liberation (*ataḥ kevalameva jñānaṃ niḥśreysasāadhanamiti*), as knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance (*avidyā-tamo-nivartaka*) and is seen to result in liberation, just as darkness and illusions such as apprehending a rope as a snake etc. are dispelled by the light of a lamp. Furthermore, knowledge requires no assistance for producing liberation as its fruit (*mokṣa-phala*). Knowledge dispels nescience, which is a pre-condition of action, and that nescience or ignorance cannot be its own dispeller.⁶⁸⁸

Thus, Śaṃkara's understanding of this verse as the attainment of the supreme self as identified with the individual-self after renouncing all sorts of action poses a sharp difference with that of MS, according to whom this means that the attainment of the qualified *brahman* is possible through utmost self-surrender. Further, it is interesting to note that though MS expresses a view different from that of Śaṃkara on *BhG* 18.66, he quotes from the latter's work (i.e. the *Viṣṇuṣaṭpadī*), which is one of the many hymns said to have been composed by Śaṃkara in praise of Lord Viṣṇu, while indicating that Śaṃkara does not convey the inner meaning of the verse, which actually talks about total surrender to the Lord.

⁶⁸⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 752 -7 ff.

The view of Roger Marcaurelle is noteworthy in this connection.⁶⁸⁹ After considering the comments of both Śaṃkara and MS on *BhG* 18.66, he maintains that it is a sheer misunderstanding on the part of MS that prevents him from grasping the implicit hermeneutical import embedded in the comments of Śaṃkara on *BhG* 18.66. As noted above, MS finds fault with Śaṃkara's interpretation of 'having renounced all *dharma*-s' in the verse as 'having renounced all right and wrong actions, i.e. all actions in a sense of physical renunciation as a prologue to the steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*)', owing to the fact that physical renunciation cannot be prescribed to Arjuna, who is a *kṣatriya* by birth, and that the idea of surrendering to the Lord is intended here. On the other hand, ironically, Ānandagiri, while commenting on this verse in Śaṃkara's *Gītābhāṣya*, mentions that Lord Kṛṣṇa takes Arjuna as an incidental addressee for the steadfastness in knowledge through physical renunciation,⁶⁹⁰ an idea that fully contradicts MS as cited above.

Thus, Marcaurelle claims, after referring to excerpts from Śaṃkara's comments on various verses in the *BhG* (e.g. *BhG* 4.23, 4.41, 9.2, 9.9, 18.12, 18.17, 18.49, 18.66) that by 'having renounced *dharma* and *adharma*' in *BhG* 18.66, Śaṃkara means 'freedom from embodiment and limitations of all actions'. Śaṃkara does not merely mean the physical abandonment of actions as a prelude to the steadfastness of knowledge, but a kind of renunciation that only liberates one from all the limitations of actions and their effects. Marcaurelle reiterates that in Śaṃkara's opinion, even this kind of renunciation is made possible after obtaining immediate self-knowledge, leaving room for those who have not yet renounced

⁶⁸⁹ Marcaurelle 2002: pp. 198-202 ff.

⁶⁹⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Ānandagiriyaṅkhyā*, pp. 753-4.

physical actions for any reason whatsoever, a view that supports the case of Arjuna, who is still a seeker after liberation. In contrast, MS asserts a path to enlightenment, where physical renunciation is not in vogue. So, Marcaurelle holds that it is a paradox on MS's part not to identify self-knowledge and liberation in a tradition where such identification is viewed favourably, even though MS has admitted the former as a minimum requirement for the latter in some places.

The manner in which MS explains the concept of complete surrender to the Lord (*śaraṇāgati*) was adopted earlier by Rāmaṇuja, who also supports the view that the devotees need not undertake any atonement in order to be cleansed of their sins, and that they need to seek the Lord alone for obtaining *bhakti-yoga*, thereby admitting *śaraṇāgati* as an aid (*aṅga*) to *bhakti-yoga*, which is the direct means for attaining liberation.⁶⁹¹

As mentioned earlier, the efficacy of loving devotion is stated by the Lord outright for the first time in the second group of six-chapters, when he holds that those who take refuge in him (*prapadyante*) alone can overcome his divine illusion (i.e. *prakṛti*) consisting of three primordial natures (*BhG* 7.14). This verse does not refer to *prapatti* as an aid to *bhakti-yoga* proper that leads to liberation. Instead, it advises one to seek the grace of the Lord (*bhagavad-prasāda*) through worshipping him in order to overcome *māyā*, which gets in the way of the true knowledge of the supreme self. MS's explanation of this verse seems to be pertinent in the context under discussion.

On the one hand, MS gives a purely non-dualistic interpretation of the view that the aspirant overcomes easily the divine illusion of the Lord by taking refuge in

⁶⁹¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 3, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, pp. 412-3 (Also see Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 193).

the Lord who, in this context, is thus characterised in non-dual terms: He one who is bereft of all limiting adjuncts (*sarvopādh-irahita*), the integrated whole (*akhaṇḍa*) that is of the nature of existence, consciousness, and bliss (*cidānanda-svarūpa*), who is the object of mental modification produced by the Upaniṣadic texts, which is (i) by nature non-conceptual or direct realisation (*nirvikalpa-sākṣātkāra-rūpa*), (ii) endowed with the quality of having form of pure consciousness (*śuddha-cidākāratva-dharma-viśiṣṭa*), (iii) produced from the maturity of contemplation (*nididhyāna-paripāka-prasūta*), and also opposed to all nescience and its effects (*sarvājñāna-tatkārya-virodhī*).

Alternatively, MS gives a pure devotional account in the following terms.⁶⁹² Those who take refuge in the Lord Vāsudeva alone, having a form of supreme-bliss-concentrate (*paramānanda-ghanamaya-mūrtimati*), who is also beyond the world-appearance or creation (*prapañca*), and pass days in constant thinking of him, are not overpowered by any of the effects of *māyā*, since their minds are immersed in love (*prema*) for the Lord, who is the ocean of immense joy (*mahānanda-samudra*).

Śaṅkara's comments also admit explicitly the efficacy of devotion. He maintains that those who, by abandoning all conventional laws of life, take shelter with the Lord alone, who is their very self and also the possessor of illusory power (*māyāvin*) as well, overcome this all-deceiving power, i.e. they become free from transmigratory bondage. Śrīdhara makes the point more explicit by interpreting that

⁶⁹² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 360.

after showing unswerving devotion to the Lord and thus getting rid of this *māyā* (even though it is insurmountable), the devotee knows the Lord.⁶⁹³

Thus, we find that, MS, along with Śaṅkara and Śrīdhara, maintains that taking refuge in the Lord as expressed in *BhG* 7.14 is a definite way of overcoming the bondage of transmigration. Likewise, in another verse of the eighteenth *adhyāya* also, Arjuna is told to take refuge in Lord Kṛṣṇa with the whole of his being, since by the grace of the Lord, he will find the eternal abode (*śvāśvata-sthāna*) of supreme peace (*parā-śānti*) [*BhG* 18.62]. MS's non-dualistic-cum-devotional attitude is also conspicuous in his explanation on this verse. MS maintains that, in order to cross the ocean of empirical existence (*samsāra-samudra*), Arjuna should take refuge in the Lord in every way (i.e. by mind, speech, and action). By the grace of the Lord, which culminates in the knowledge of reality, Arjuna will attain supreme peace upon the cessation of nescience and its effects, and experience the eternal abode in the form of non-dual-self-effulgent-supreme-bliss (*advitīya-svapraśānta-paramānandarūpa*).

Śaṅkara's interpretation of the word 'eternal abode' in the verse as the supreme abode of Lord Viṣṇu⁶⁹⁴ is of help in treating this verse as an indicator of *bhakti-yoga*. The Lord's magnanimity to his devotee is also found in MS's explanation of *BhG* 7.20, where the Lord has said that other devotees, devoid of true knowledge, resort to other deities. MS maintains that here, the intention of the all-merciful Lord is that all kinds of devotees (i.e. the suffering, the seekers for knowledge, the seekers for prosperity, and the wise) without any exception attain the most excellent of all results called emancipation, by taking refuge in him alone.

⁶⁹³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 361; *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 358-61; *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, pp. 356-61.

⁶⁹⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 749.

While explaining another utterance of the Lord of the same type (i.e. *BhG* 7.26), MS, following Śaṃkara, says that, though the Lord is the seer of all (*sarvadarśī*), except his devotees favoured with his grace (*anugraha*), nobody whosever knows him, owing to being deluded by the magical power of the Lord, and consequently ignoring to worship him as a result of lacking the knowledge of his reality.⁶⁹⁵

In *BhG* 7.29, the Lord again says that devotees resort to him with a desire to overcome worldly sufferings, e.g. old age and death etc.; and consequently, knows him and all about the indwelling self and actions. MS explains this statement in the following manner. He holds that, being disgusted with the sorrows of this world and seeking to put an end to the numerous as well as unbearable worldly pains and sufferings like old age (*jarā*), death (*maraṇa*) etc., those who, by resorting to the Lord, perform activities that are prescribed by the scriptures, and are dedicated to him without having any desire for their fruits, get their mind purified, and, consequently, realise him as the cause of the universe, the owner of illusory power and the pure *brahman* [i.e. the implied meaning of the term ‘that’ (*tat*) in ‘That thou art’]. MS continues by saying that such devotees also can realise the self, which is revealed through body and is unlimited by limiting adjuncts, by virtue of being denoted by the term ‘thou’ (*tvam*). All the means of realising the entities that are indicated by ‘that’ and ‘thou’ respectively, viz. approaching a teacher, listening to and contemplating on his teaching, with a spirit of certainty in their result etc., are also known to them.⁶⁹⁶

Thus, MS quite elaborately gives justification for the dependence on the Lord, and interprets the Lord’s utterance under consideration from the non-dualistic

⁶⁹⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 365-6, 371.

⁶⁹⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 373-4.

standpoint by showing that the aspirant, by taking refuge in the Lord, realises the individual self, the supreme self, and the means of identifying them as non-different.

Dhanapati Sūri says in this connection that what is intended by the word ‘action’ in the verse is not what MS means, viz. approaching a teacher, listening to the scriptures from him, etc. He maintains that in the verse: ‘....And the outpouring that brings about the origination of the being of the creatures is called act’ (*BhG* 8.3), the word ‘act’ (*karma*) stands for Vedic rituals like the offering of oblation of rice cooked in milk (*caru*), cakes (*puroḍāśa*) etc. to the Lord, as is clear from Śaṃkara’s commentary on this verse: ‘...the sacrificial act consisting in offering cooked rice in milk, cakes etc. to the Lord is meant by the word ‘act’...’ MS himself has also interpreted the word *karma* employed in *BhG* 8.3 in the same manner: ‘...offering consisting in *yāga*, *dāna*, *homa* as laid down in the scriptures...is here meant by the word ‘action’...’ Hence, when MS explains the word *karma* employed in *BhG* 7.29 in a dissimilar manner, his explanation, Dhanapati holds, becomes inconsistent and opposed to the commentary of Śaṃkara.⁶⁹⁷

The Lord further says that in the case of those who serve him exclusively, seeking no other end but him, the Lord takes care of them (*BhG* 9.22). While explaining the verse, MS, like Śaṃkara, holds that those who are desireless (*niṣkāma*), and possess right knowledge of the reality (*samyagdarśī*), become dispassionate towards all kinds of enjoyment on account of being perceiver of non-duality everywhere. They contemplate on their indwelling-self as the Lord

⁶⁹⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 379-80; *Madhusūdanīvyaḥkhyā*, p. 379; *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, p. 374.

Nārāyaṇa together with the idea that ‘I myself am the Lord Vāsudeva, the self of all, and no other object exists apart from him’. Such renouncers become instilled with the fourfold spiritual disciplines (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya*), seeing the Lord everywhere uninterruptedly.⁶⁹⁸ Thus, MS’s assertion in this connection is consistent with the doctrine of non-dualism and also with his devotional leanings.

Besides, there are innumerable references to dedication to the Lord in the *AdRR* of MS as well. In one such place, while giving advice, with the support of the *BhG*, *MBh* etc., to the devotee to propel him to the path of non-dualism to attain liberation, MS instructs the devotee to worship the Lord. When the devotee expresses his inability to follow this instruction due to his flitting mind affected by attachment to objects, MS directs him to give up these attachments and undergo the disciplines that cause the knowledge of the reality. Further, when the devotee requests MS to advise him in a more suitable way for attaining the knowledge of the reality, MS asks him to remember Lord Viṣṇu constantly, through which the devotee will be able to practise the required spiritual disciplines after getting his mind purified. When the devotee says that he is even unable to sing the praise of the Lord (*bhagavannāmakīrtana*), MS advises him to dedicate all actions being undertaken -- whether ordinary or Vedic -- to Lord Vāsudeva.⁶⁹⁹ Even in his *MST*, in the case of Lord Hari (*Hari-pakṣa*) MS recommends in no uncertain term devotion to the Lord or rather surrendering by the devotee to him. While describing the Lord as ever-auspicious irrespective of the nature of his devotees, MS maintains that even when an inauspicious person, or one having bad conduct remembers the

⁶⁹⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 431.

⁶⁹⁹ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 41 ff. (It may be viewed as a dialogue between MS and a dualist like Śaṅkara Miśra).

name of the Lord, the Lord appears to him to be auspicious out of his (i.e. the Lord's) immense affection to the devotees (*ati-bhakta-vātsalya*). Further, in order to lay stress upon his support for devotion, MS adds that the same view is applicable in the case of Lord Śiva (*Hara-pakṣa*) as well.⁷⁰⁰

In continuation of our discussion on *śaraṇāgati* as an aid to *bhakti-yoga*, it may be said that *śaraṇāgati* is admitted by Rāmānuja as an aid to *bhakti-yoga* that helps one to overcome the hindrances to the way of *bhakti-yoga* as stated in the *BhG*, thereby recognising its due importance. Though *śaraṇāgati*, which is otherwise known as *prapatti* (though they hold subtle theological differences)⁷⁰¹ has been given a very important place in Rāmānuja's philosophy, he does not view it as an alternative and immediate means of liberation in his commentary on the *BhG*. In his commentary on the *BS* (especially *BS* 3.2.34) called the *Śrībhāṣya*, however, Rāmānuja hints at admitting *prapatti* as an independent means of attaining liberation by maintaining that the supreme person to be attained needs to be himself the means of attaining him. With the support of the Śruti text (i.e. *MU* 3.2.3), Rāmānuja holds that there can be no other means but the Lord himself to attain

⁷⁰⁰ *Śivamahimnaḥstotra* 1996: *Madhusūdanī* on verse 24, p. 94.

⁷⁰¹ Though these two words have different textual lineages, by the time of Vedānta Deśika or Venkaṭanātha (13/14th century CE) they are taken to be synonyms. Likewise, in the *Yatīndramatadīpikā* of Śrīnivāsācārya – 17th century CE, *śaraṇāgati* is said to have six limbs: to conceive what is in conformity with the will of God, to reject what is against the will of God, to have faith that the Lord will save the self, to take the Lord only as the protector, not to have any sense of conceit (to the Lord), and to have complete or absolute surrender of oneself to the Lord (*ānukūlyasya saṃkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam / rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso gopṭṛtva varaṇaṃ tathā // kārpaṇyamātmanikṣepaḥ śaḍaṅgāni pracakṣate //* (quoted in Bhattachara and Bhattacharya Śāstrī 1978-73, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 269). Here, 'the complete surrender of oneself to the Lord' (*ātmanikṣepa*) is the whole (*aṅgin*) and the other five are parts (*aṅga-s*). The *Lakṣmītantra*, a Pāñcarāra text, mentions that 'nyāsa' which is synonymous with 'nikṣepa' has five components. *Prapatti* is thus synonymous with the five-limbed *śaraṇāgati*. It is also known as *nyāsa-vidyā*, *tyāga*, *saṃnyāsa* etc. (Gupta 2007: *Lakṣmītantra* 17.74 ff., 28.11 ff., pp. 94 ff., 150 ff.). Besides, some of the earliest Vaiṣaṇava Āgama-s predating Vedānta Deśika refer *śaraṇāgati* to be the surrender to the Lord with utmost faith (*mahā-viśvāsa*) that the Lord (i.e. the desired of the devotee) cannot be obtained with any other means but one's surrender to him (with utmost faith). Thus, *śaraṇāgati* is a type of *prapatti* and later is being used interchangeably.

him.⁷⁰² What Rāmānuja has implicitly admitted here is made explicit in another of his work called the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*. Rāmānuja states there the view that *śaraṇāgati* is to be viewed as a different and direct means of liberation for those who are totally unable to undergo *bhakti-yoga*, with no other option left for them for attaining the Lord.⁷⁰³ Again, Vedānta Deśika, while commenting on Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya*, holds *śaraṇāgati* to be a separate and direct means of liberation for those unable to adopt the difficult path of *bhakti-yoga*, though the *BhG* does not mention this clearly.⁷⁰⁴

5.2.2.4. Madhusūdana and Rāmānuja on *bhakti-yoga*

Having kept the abovementioned facts in mind along with our reference to Rāmanuja provided sporadically throughout our work, we may now make an attempt to evaluate the extent to which MS finds affinity with him, a question which has also been raised and answered meticulously by a modern scholar named Sanjukta Gupta.⁷⁰⁵

At the outset, the influence of the *BP*, which has its origin probably in the southern part of India, is very much conspicuous among all sects of Vaiṣṇavism. The spontaneous fervent love for the Lord, with little philosophical speculation, of the Tamil poet-saints called the Ālvārs (ca. 3rd quarter of 1st century CE) got expressed systematically in the *BP* and found later its methodical theological dimension in the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta propagated by Rāmānuja. For Rāmānuja,

⁷⁰² *Brahmasūtra* 1989: Vol. 2, p. 453.

⁷⁰³ Cf. Srinivasa Chari 2005: pp. 246-7 (Also refer to Rāmānujācārya 1377 Bengali Era: *Śrīśaraṇāgatigadya*, pp. 1-31).

⁷⁰⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 3, *Tātparyacandrikā* on *BhG* 18.66, pp. 411-7 (Also see Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 247).

⁷⁰⁵ See Gupta 2006: p. 125 ff. and Gupta Gombrich 1991: p. 234 ff.

brahman is non-dual but qualified in nature, possessing numerous transcendental, divine qualities -- a fact that we have pointed out at the beginning of the previous chapter in connection with explaining MS's treatment of the very term 'Lord' (*bhagavān*) in the *BhG*. Besides, the famous verse of MS in both his *AdS* and *GD* that enumerates the divine qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the highest reality to him: 'I know no higher reality than Kṛṣṇa whose hands are adorned with a flute, whose complexion is like a fresh rain-cloud, who is clad in a yellow garment, whose lower lip is reddish like a *bimba* fruit, whose face is as beautiful as the full moon, and whose eyes are like lotuses'⁷⁰⁶ makes us think that Rāmānuja's treatment of *brahman* finds its zenith in this couplet.⁷⁰⁷

Such a couplet, placed at a crucial place in MS's *AdS*, seems to be at odds with the main thesis of this work, and the answer to the charge of incongruity due to this verse is given by one of the commentators of MS. Thus, in the second chapter of his *AdS*, after dealing with a section on the formlessness (*nirākāratva*) of *brahman*, MS, while taking up the next section on the fitness of *brahman* being knowledge or consciousness etc. (i.e. *brahman* does not *have* knowledge in the common sense of the term, as *brahman* by nature *is* pure knowledge), begins with this couplet, which is also found as the first concluding verse in his *GD*, in praising Lord Kṛṣṇa with a beautiful form. While commenting on this verse, Brahmānanda Sarasvatī emphasises the natural need of *bhakti* for obtaining mental purification etc. He points out that, though the numerous forms of the Lord are transitory and false, worshipping them is fairly possible in the empirical state, while its fruit is the

⁷⁰⁶ *vaṁśīvibhūṣitakarānnavanīradābhāt pītāmbarādaruṇabimbaphalādharoṣṭhāt / pūrṇendusundaramukhādaravindanetrāt kṛṣṇātparam kimapi tattvamahaṁ na jāne* // (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 750 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, 1st concluding verse, p. 775).

⁷⁰⁷ Compare this couplet with the introduction to Rāmānuja's commentary on the *BhG* (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghāṭaḥ*, pp. 5-6).

purification of the mind etc. He maintains this with the support of the following texts from the Śruti and Smṛti: ‘Only in a man who has the deepest love for God, and who shows the same love toward his teacher as toward God, do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth’ (ŚU 6.23), ‘Neither the righteousness attended with truth and benevolence nor the scholarship accompanied with penance completely cleanses oneself who is devoid of devotion to the Lord’. Brahmānanda adds that it is like a consequence of the service rendered to one’s preceptor. Even if the body of the preceptor is impermanent, services rendered to it yield certain results. In this way, worshipping the impermanent form of the Lord also produces the desired results. He adds, as noted before, in this context that MS, in spite of being a *jīvanmukta*, remembers Lord Kṛṣṇa because of his past dispositions of worshipping (*pūrva-saṁcita-bhajana-vāsanā*) Lord Kṛṣṇa.⁷⁰⁸ But MS seems to be aware of this possible criticism, as in his *BhR* he states that it is not to be mistaken as pure dispositions, but a semblance of it (*vāsanābhāsa*), since in the softened state of mind, nothing can enter as a disposition.⁷⁰⁹

For Rāmānuja, devotion (*bhakti*) and meditation (*dhyāna*) may be used interchangeably. While commenting on *BS* 1.1.1, Rāmānuja, with the support of Śruti and Smṛti texts, maintains that meditation (*dhyāna*) is a continuous flow of remembrance (*avichhinna-smṛti*) like the flow of oil. He reiterates that it is known from all the Upaniṣads that the word ‘knowledge’ (*vedana*) prescribed as a means of attaining liberation is synonymous with the word ‘worship’ (*upāsanā*). Further, devotion (*bhakti*) is synonymous with constant remembrance, which thus becomes

⁷⁰⁸ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: *Gauḍabrahmānandī (Laghucandrikā)*, p. 750 [Also see Mishra 2009: pp. 187-8].

⁷⁰⁹ *Sāṁkhya Vedāntatīrtha* 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.7 and the author’s elucidation thereon, p. 23 (Also see Mishra 2006a: p. 126).

the same as meditation. Thus, for Rāmānuja, meditation is devotion, which is synonymous with worship.⁷¹⁰ As Gupta holds, ‘Rāmānuja defines *bhakti* as the experiencing of love for the divine who possesses countless auspicious qualities. This experience of love is intensified by direct and lasting understanding of the true nature of god as revealed in deep meditation.’⁷¹¹ Besides, Rāmānuja, as pointed out earlier, maintains that dedicated service to the Lord coupled with love for him makes a devotee eligible for realising the true nature of the Lord by way of obtaining his grace. While complete surrender to the Lord for his mercy is called *prapatti* or *śaraṇāgati*, the devotee’s love for the Lord is known as *parābhakti*, which, when maintained with the realisation of true nature of the Lord through regimented meditation, becomes *upāsanā* both for Rāmānuja and MS. Though we do not find Rāmānuja explicitly using the expression ‘*bhakti-rasa*’, he certainly admits that the unswerving meditation on the Lord in accordance with the description of his exquisite beauties or transcendental qualities deepens the devotee’s love for the Lord.⁷¹²

Turning to MS, we can see that his definition of *bhakti* as the incessant flow of the modification of the mind directed towards the Lord through spiritual disciplines (*BhR* 1.3) had affinity with Rāmānuja’s description of uninterrupted remembrance or meditation as *bhakti*. The utility of service to the Lord for obtaining his grace is also admitted by MS in no uncertain terms. Thus, MS’s *bhakti* experience as Advaitic *vṛtti-jñāna* (knowledge of the modification of the mind) bears similarity with Rāmānuja’s *bhakti* experience as *yogic samādhi*.

⁷¹⁰ *Brahmasūtra* 1989: Vol. 1, pp. 55-61 (Also see Maitra 2006: p. 213).

⁷¹¹ Gupta Gombrich 1991: p. 236.

⁷¹² See Gupta Gombrich 1991: pp. 236-7.

In this connection, it may be noted that, though MS himself was also a Vaiṣṇava, as is evidenced from the above discussion, he differs from the other dualistic Vaiṣṇavas like Madhva etc. In an important place in his *SB*, after pointing out a possible objection that in the non-dualistic notion of liberation, the bliss of *brahman* cannot be enjoyed due to the absence of agent, senses, and the means of manifesting it, MS refutes it by asserting that the self, being of the nature of self-effulgent consciousness, does not need any means of manifestation. In this connection, MS refers to the popular axiom of the dualist Vaiṣṇavas that one can enjoy the taste of sugar only if he *consumes* it, and not by *becoming identical* with sugar. This can be understood as stating that, in like manner, one can enjoy the bliss of *brahman* only if he is different from *brahman* -- a view opposed to the non-dualistic notion of liberation.⁷¹³

Thus, before giving a brief note in the next section of this chapter on MS's significant contribution to the Advaita Vedānta (i.e. his admission of *bhakti* alongside the *jñāna-mārga*), one may make the claim based on the above discussion that the discipline of devotion, as found in the *BhG*, is the surest and easiest means of attaining the supreme-self that may be adopted by all kinds of devotees.⁷¹⁴ If it is alleged that the notion of devotion is intelligible only in a dualistic system, then the non-dualistic version of devotion that has been presented in *BhG* itself [*BhG* 4.10, 6.29, 7.23, 9.29, 11.55, 12.8, 14.26, 18.55 etc. may be cited in this context, where the devotee (i.e. the individual-self) and the Lord (i.e. the supreme-self) are considered to be being merged into each other].⁷¹⁵ Again, *bhakti* is not understood as a distinct path of realisation; it is treated as a means for bringing an accord between

⁷¹³ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: pp. 145 ff.

⁷¹⁴ See Srinivasa Chari 2005: p. 132.

⁷¹⁵ Cf. Panigrahi 1994: p. 123.

karma and *jñāna*, by helping in acquiring *jñāna* and detachment (*vairāgya*), which facilitate the attainment of supreme reality.⁷¹⁶ However, the views of other commentators like Rāmānuja (who maintains at the very beginning of his commentary on the *BhG* that *bhakti-yoga*, as aided by *jñāna* and *karma-yoga*-s, is the path of liberation) and Śrīdhara (who states towards the end of his commentary on the *BhG* that devotion to the Lord can by itself lead to liberation), are to be taken into consideration while assessing the view of MS regarding this important path of liberation.⁷¹⁷

5.3. Contribution of Madhusūdana to Vedānta discourse on *bhakti-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*

As pointed out in chapters one and two, the uniqueness of MS in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta is generally held to be his attempt at situating *bhakti-mārga* therein, which apparently contradicts the metaphysical foundation of the Advaita system, though we have shown above with textual support that the Advaita Vedānta does not find any difficulty in accommodating *bhakti* within its framework from the practical (*vyāvahārika*) point of view. MS's remarkable contribution is that, in spite of being a die-hard follower of the Advaita tradition, he has made a bold step through his prolific writings to substantiate the doctrines of Advaita Vedānta, while being an ardent devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In doing so he finds no contradiction, as is clear from his comments on the *ŚŚ* of Sarvajñātman.⁷¹⁸ While an unambiguous

⁷¹⁶ See Panigrahi 1994: p. 123.

⁷¹⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghātaḥ*, p.6 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīdharaivyaṅkyā*, p. 775.

⁷¹⁸ As noted, it is a versified summary of Śaṅkara's comments on the *BS*.

indication of synthesising *jñāna-mārga* and *bhakti-mārga* is found at the very beginning of *SŚ*, where the author pays obeisance to the unqualified *brahman* called Lord Murāri, MS correspondingly salutes that *brahman*, who, as an offshoot of religious austerity of Nanda (i.e. adoptive father of Lord Kṛṣṇa), plays his divine flute for the delight of all at Vṛndāvana, with his beautiful face similar to the moon and his eyes like a lotus, who, as the real (*satya*), infinite, knowledge, and non-dual bliss (*jñāna-ananta-advaya-sukha*), has been realised by the great sages while attaining liberation, after approaching a teacher and attaining mystic trance or absorption (*samādhi*) on that *brahman*.⁷¹⁹ Therefore, the unqualified *brahman* in Advaita has been termed by MS nothing but the qualified *brahman*, i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa, an object of devotion, and that *nirguṇa-bhakti-mārga* is not something new or alien to MS. Furthermore, at the beginning of his *magnum opus AdS*, MS pays salutation to Lord Viṣṇu as the undifferentiated *brahman*. Having established the falsity of the empirical world in the first chapter of the *AdS*, MS validates the non-dual reality, i.e. *brahman*. But it is interesting to note that, at the end of this chapter, MS eulogies Lord Hari in two verses as the undifferentiated *brahman*, who is also the only essence of the Śrutis. Again, MS goes further to compare himself with the all-inclusive Lord Hari.⁷²⁰

And perhaps this is the reason why MS, following the lead of the *BP* that promulgates *nirguṇa-bhakti* extensively in terms of admitting Lord Kṛṣṇa as the unqualified *brahman*, admits *bhakti-yoga* as an independent goal, even to the extent of admitting it as the supreme goal of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*) in his

⁷¹⁹ Giri 2007: Pt. 1, *Maṅgalācaraṇam*, p. 3.

⁷²⁰ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 1-2, 659 (Also see Nair 1990: p. 109).

BhR.⁷²¹ In his comments on the *BhG* (e.g. *BhG* 6.47, 7.16, 9.1) as well, MS hints at describing *bhakti-yoga* as an independent path of liberation. At the beginning of his comments on *BhG* 9, MS asserts that the reality of the Lord (*bhagavattattva*) and devotion to him (*bhakti*) are the means of attaining immediate liberation (*sākṣānmokṣa*). While elucidating *BhG* 18.66, he states further that the steadfastness in devotion to the Lord (*bhagavadbhakti-niṣṭhā*) is not only the means (*sādhana*) of the steadfastness in action (*karma-niṣṭhā*) and steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*), but also their result (*phala*), and that in agreement with other *śāstra*-s, the concluding teaching of the *BhG* is surrender to the Lord (*īśvara-śaraṇatā*).⁷²²

As we have noted earlier, for both Śaṅkara and MS, *karma* and *bhakti* are considered in the *BhG* as a means subsidiary to *jñāna*, which ultimately leads to liberation. We have also noticed earlier that, for MS, the *BhG* propagates the view that the unqualified *brahman* could also be attained through loving devotion to the Lord.⁷²³ Thus, while pointing out *jñāna-mārga* and *bhakti-mārga* as independent and effective means of attaining liberation in his *BhR* as well as in the *GD*, MS maintains that they are not indistinguishable, and vary in terms of their nature, means, goal, and the persons entitled to both (*adhikārin*-s). According to him, i) while devotion is a conditional modification of the mind (*savikalpaka-vṛtti*), assuming the form of the Lord after it becomes flexible or melted (*dravībhūta*), the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahmavidyā*) is an unconditional modification of the mind when it is not flexible or melted, and has only the self without a second as its object; ii) while hearing of the compositions describing the exalted qualities of the Lord is the means of devotion, listening to the great sayings of Vedānta like ‘That thou art’

⁷²¹ Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *BhR* 1.1 and the author’s elucidation thereon, p. 1.

⁷²² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 339-40, 419, and 754-5.

⁷²³ See Rajagopalan 2003: p. 258.

etc. is the means of *brahma-vidyā*; iii) while the fruit of devotion is the intense love for the Lord (*bhagavad-viṣayaka-prema-prakarṣa*), that of *brahma-vidyā* is the cessation of nescience, which is the primal cause of all evils; iv) while all beings are entitled to devotion, the mendicant of the highest order (*parama-haṃsa-parivrājaka*), with the possession of the ‘fourfold means’ (*sādhana-catuṣṭaya*) is eligible for *brahma-vidyā*. Further, MS asserts that for both devotion and *brahma-vidyā*, the results of meritorious deeds (*sukṛta*) such as sacrifice, charity etc. are the same, just as in the case of heaven (*svarga*) and the desire for knowledge (*vividiṣā*),⁷²⁴ i.e. the inclination to undertake either the means of knowledge or that of devotion results from the performance of meritorious deeds prescribed in the Vedas. And in this way, both these means (i.e. devotion and knowledge) overlap each other, and that *jñāna-yoga* incorporates *bhakti* also.⁷²⁵ Further, while *brahma-vidyā* is restricted to a few, that *bhakti-yoga* can be undertaken by everybody irrespective of caste, sex etc. is made clear again by MS in another context in his *HLV*. MS maintains that not only people of certain sex and age etc. is permitted to observe *bhakti-yoga*, as is the case with *Agnihotra* etc., but it is recommended for everyone (irrespective of sex, age etc.). With this utterance, the women-folk (*strīkula*), young (*bāla*), matured (*prauḍha*), and the aged (*vayaṣka*) people also are indicated by the sage (*ṛṣi*).⁷²⁶

⁷²⁴ MS, with the support of the Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Śruti texts, explains that just like meritorious deeds, (being conducive to the purification of mind), can be a means to more than one end, i.e. devotion and the knowledge of *brahman*, they can also be a means either for obtaining heaven or for acquiring the desire for knowledge (*vividiṣā*) [Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *Ṭikā* on *BhR* 1.1, p. 15].

⁷²⁵ See Mishra 2006a: pp. 115 and 117.

⁷²⁶ *Harilālāmṛtam* 1933: p. 14 (Also see Mishra 2009: p. 228).

On the basis of the theistic Upaniṣads, *BP*, *BhG*, and other theistic sources that posit *bhakti* as superior to *jñāna*, MS expresses the view (in his *AdS*) that the former leads to attainment of liberation more quickly than the latter, there being the same sort of achievement in both the cases.⁷²⁷ But it may be pointed out on the basis MS's views on the difference between *bhakti* and *brahma-jñāna* that the former cannot be admitted as the direct means of liberation, since liberation results from the cessation of nescience which resides in *brahman*, and it is only through the knowledge of reality (i.e. *brahman*) that nescience is removed. Besides, *bhakti*, being determinate in nature (since it presupposes the distinction between worship, worshipped, and worshipper), cannot be related to *brahman*, which is bereft of distinctions, and hence, is also indeterminate or unqualified by nature. On the basis of various *BhG* texts (e.g. *BhG* 10.10, 13.18), MS maintains that one attains devotion as an end (*sādhya-bhakti*) through the observance of devotion as a means (*sādhana-bhakti*), and that liberation is achieved through the intuitive knowledge of *brahman* obtained from the Upaniṣadic texts. So, in the course of attaining liberation, one needs to pursue *bhakti* when he longs for intuitive knowledge that alone leads to liberation.⁷²⁸

In spite of the fact that MS admits both the means of knowledge and devotion as independently effective in attaining liberation, yet his penchant seems to be for devotion, as is found throughout the *GD* as well as *BhR*, especially in his bold assertion in one of the introductory verses in the *GD* (i.e. verse 37) that even for a *jīvanmukta*, *bhakti* remains spontaneous, besides his verbatim reproduction of a *BP* verse (i.e. *BP* 1.7.10) both in the *GD* (i.e. introductory verse 38) and in the

⁷²⁷ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 897 (Also see Sharma 1967: p. 132).

⁷²⁸ See Mishra 2006a: pp. 115, 118-9.

BhR, which also conveys the same fact (i.e. spontaneity of devotion) for the self-immersed sages (in the state of *jīvanmukti*).⁷²⁹ He also describes *bhakti* in the *GD* as a link between and subsisting in *karma* and *jñāna* (introductory verses 6-7). In this connection, as we have pointed out earlier, the views of both Śaṅkara and MS on treating devotion on a par with knowledge, or, at times, admitting devotion as the cause of knowledge, need to be taken into consideration, if one has to justify MS's effort for amalgamating both the means, i.e. *bhakti* and *jñāna-mārga-s*.

Devotion as a means of liberation has been eulogised by Śaṅkara in no ambiguous terms in his *VC*, where he says that among all the means of salvation, devotion is supreme, and that contemplating on one's own essential nature (*sva-svarūpa-anusandhāna*) is called devotion. Again, devotion is also regarded by others as contemplating on the true nature of one's own self (*sva-ātmatattva-anusandhāna*).⁷³⁰ Thus, Śaṅkara's definition of devotion as the knowledge of one's own self (i.e. deliberation on the knowledge of self as distinct from that of non-self) in the present instance also lends support to MS's act of equating *jñānin* (man of knowledge) with *bhakta* (devotee). Besides, for MS, a *bhakta* does not achieve any thing extra than what a *jñānin* does, for, as we have pointed out earlier, MS holds that even the grace of the Lord cannot exhaust the *prārabdha-karma-s*; they get exhausted only after being experienced by the aspirant.⁷³¹

We also find the utility of devotion in the tradition echoed even by the staunch followers of Advaita like Brahmānanada Sarasvatī. While commenting on the *SB* of MS, Brahmānanada goes to the extent of saying that even for

⁷²⁹ Sāṃkhya Vedāntatīrtha 1404 Bengali Era: *Tīkā* on *BhR* 1.1, p. 17.

⁷³⁰ *Śrīśaṅkaragranthāvaliḥ* 1999: Vol. 3, *VC* 32-33a, p. 7 (Also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: p. 565).

⁷³¹ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 892-3 (Also see Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 19).

understanding the true import of the Upaniṣadic texts, one must have devotion.⁷³² In spite of all these supports, and the clear indication by MS that he follows the *bhakti-mārga* and treats *nirguṇa-brahman* as non-different from the *saguṇa-brahman*, i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa, his idea of deity, as is described in his various works like the *GD*, *BhR* etc., remains transtheistic.⁷³³ Herein lies the significance of his attempt at integrating *bhakti* with the doctrines of Advaita Vedānta, which is also found in the life and works of his great predecessor Śaṅkara. As one of the modern scholars points out,

It is a matter of fortunate circumstances that in the works of Sri Madhusudana Saraswathi we find monistic philosophy being synthesised with devotion, i.e., Advaita with *bhakti*. It is an unusual trend for Advaita, as it is commonly understood, but there is inherently nothing strange for Advaita to advocate *bhakti*. Bhakti or devotion was, indeed, a predominant emotion even in Sri Sankara's life. Though ultimately Sri Sankara reduces *bhakti* to the level of a purificatory means, he was a great *bhakta* of Sri Bhagavan Krishna in his personal form (*sic*).

⁷³² *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: *Nyāratnāvalī*, p. 364.

⁷³³ See Nelson 2007: p. 315.

The *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and the Commentarial Tradition of the *Bhagavadgītā*

At the outset, it needs to be borne in mind that the *BhG*, being an important and popular philosophical and religious text sacred to all Hindus, has drawn the attention of almost all those who tried to find out some support in it for their own doctrines. A critical study of both the ancient and modern interpreters of the *BhG* makes one think that perhaps none of them can claim to represent faithfully the intention of the *BhG* in its entirety. Many of the commentators of the *BhG* also commented on the Upaniṣads and on the *BS*, and, in their opinion, all these sources express the same doctrine. Each one of these commentators has explained these texts from the particular standpoint adopted by him, and while some verses of the *BhG* may be easily interpreted in a manner that is consistent with such a standpoint, this need not be the case with some other verses of that work. It is thus only natural that the interpretation of the *BhG* by a commentator is likely to be criticised by another subsequent commentator belonging to a rival school of thought. The commentaries on the *BhG* by Śaṅkara and MS are no exceptions to such a general rule about the commentaries. But what is interesting to note here is that in some cases, even those commentators of the *BhG* who belong to the same school of thought have not been unanimous on all issues regarding the interpretation of this text. Thus, MS has respectfully disagreed with Śaṅkara in a few cases, while

Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri, Veṅkaṭanātha, and Dhanapati Sūri, all of whom belong to the Advaita school of Vedānta, have from time to time criticised the interpretation of MS and tried to show the superiority of the commentary of Śaṅkara on the *BhG*.

This chapter attempts to point out the points of agreement and disagreement between Śaṅkara and MS. We have also noted how the commentators posterior to MS have reacted to the *GD*.

6.1. Modern scholars on the *Bhagavadgītā* commentary of Śaṅkarācārya and others

While explaining the views of MS in his *GD*, we have explained and shown in detail how the other works of Śaṅkara and MS lend support to their respective understandings of the *BhG*. Most modern scholars seem not to hold Śaṅkara as an authentic interpreter of the *BhG*, especially when viewed in relation to his other works. As a detailed discussion on it would be out of place, we will just mention the views of the scholars, and subsequently deal with a few verses of the *BhG*, with a view to judge Śaṅkara's interpretation of those places. While doing so, references to the *GD* of MS will also be taken into consideration.

As Arvind Sharma points out, any attempt to classify the *BhG* as a representative of a particular tradition of thought is bound to distort its internal integrity. In his words:

Any attempt...to systemise it is bound to produce a twofold effect: (a) to shed more light on those verses which accord with the projected system and clarify them; and (b) to cast into greater darkness those which don't and distort them. The attempt to systemise the Gita

could also produce another twofold effect: (a) over-interpretation of those verses which are in accord with one's system, and (b) under-interpretation of those which are not.⁷³⁴

Nevertheless, the general agreement among scholars is that the Advaita commentators, beginning with Śaṃkara, need to force far more of their interpretations of the text in order to agree with their basic philosophical principles, as compared to those who allow for some degree of dualism within their system, or those who place a greater emphasis on the paths of action and devotion.

For example, T. G. Mainkar, in a critical study of important topics of the text as interpreted by Śaṃkara and other major commentators, has argued that Śaṃkara felt the necessity to present the teaching of the *BhG* as consistent with his non-dual philosophy, in accordance with which only knowledge can lead to salvation, and that his strategy for achieving this involved both the imposition of his own ideas upon the text and the neglect of those passages which could not be brought into line with his non-dualist approach.⁷³⁵ As Mainkar observes:

Śaṃkara's comments reverse the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*...Śaṃkara has laid quite an undue emphasis on Knowledge, even at the cost of *Karman* and *Bhakti*; and in order to achieve this, he has understood additional words, reversed the sense of the verses and finally changed the spirit of the poem. He is not a reliable interpreter of the *Bhagavadgītā* as the spirit of the poem is not faithfully reflected in his comments. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he is the least faithful interpreter of the *Bhagavadgītā*.⁷³⁶

Mainkar, however, considers the commentaries of Rāmānuja, Rāmakaṇṭha, or Ānandavardhana to be more faithful than that of Śaṃkara, while acknowledging that no commentator of the *BhG* has been absolutely faithful to the text.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁴ Sharma 1986: p. 106.

⁷³⁵ Mainkar 1969: p. 59.

⁷³⁶ Mainkar 1969: p. 65.

⁷³⁷ Mainkar 1969: Front flap.

Likewise, P. M. Modi tries to demonstrate how Śaṅkara's commentary on the *BhG* distorts the text,⁷³⁸ and Eliot Deutsch and J. A. B. van Buitenen think that Śaṅkara used the *BhG* as a medium for promulgating his preconceived philosophical thought.⁷³⁹ Similar estimations are offered by G. A. Feuerstein and others,⁷⁴⁰ while others, such as S. S. Bhawe, attempt to show that Śaṅkara's interpretation is compatible with the text of the *BhG*.⁷⁴¹

Similarly, S. M. Srinivasa Chari, while critically evaluating the commentaries by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva on the *BhG*, remarks in the preface of his work:

My earlier books on the Upaniṣads and the *Vedāntasūtra* based on an objective evaluation of the comments of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva have attempted to show that the main tenets of Advaita Vedānta are not reflected in these two basic sourcebooks. The present work attempts to make a similar study of the *Bhagavadgītā*, with a view to determine the nature of the philosophical doctrines adumbrated in the verses of the *Gītā*.⁷⁴²

Thus, Chari starts his work with an intention to show that Śaṅkara's commentary on the *BhG* is less faithful than those of Rāmānuja and Madhva.

Further, against the criticism that Rāmānuja, being a proponent of the Vaiṣṇava cult, is much closer to the intention of the text of the *BhG* than that of Śaṅkara, A. G. Krishna Warriar points out that the *BhG* is an integrated work which represents both personal and impersonal notion of God. He also holds that devotion and knowledge get merged in the *BhG* as means and end, which truly justifies Śaṅkara's position in his comments on the *BhG*.⁷⁴³

⁷³⁸ Modi 1951: pp. 229-30.

⁷³⁹ Deutsch and Buitenen 1971: p. 213.

⁷⁴⁰ Feuerstein 1974: p. 31.

⁷⁴¹ Bhawe 1952: pp. 73-92.

⁷⁴² Srinivasa Chari 2005: Preface, p. xv.

⁷⁴³ Warriar 2002: Introduction, p. xv.

Nevertheless, Śaṃkara's influence on Sanskrit scholarship has been so great that R. C. Zaehner believed subsequent interpreters to be in thrall to his understanding of the text and to unduly ignore other traditional commentaries. As he writes, these interpreters

'...are conditioned by the most ancient and the most authoritative of the medieval commentaries, that of the founder of the extreme school of Vedāntic non-dualism, Śaṃkara. Meanwhile the commentaries of the 'modified non-dualist' Rāmānuja, so much nearer in spirit to the Gītā, and of the dualist Madhva and his successors had largely fallen into neglect.'⁷⁴⁴

Again, W. Douglas P. Hill, G. A. Feuerstein etc. maintain that it would be a mistake to imagine that these other great commentators always present a perfectly accurate interpretation of the *BhG*, the 'true meaning' of the text. Rāmānuja, for example, has been judged to overemphasise the devotional aspect of the *BhG*.⁷⁴⁵ On the other hand, K. T. Pandurangi highlights Madhva's extensive references to the Smṛtis, and opines that Madhva's extensive application of the historical point of view instead of mere textual analysis takes the *BhG* far away from its being an authority of a particular tradition.⁷⁴⁶ But criticism is made against Madhva by Hill etc. for being so extravagant in his approach that he loses the teaching of the text itself.⁷⁴⁷ Such being the views of the scholars, let us choose below a few verses of the *BhG*, with reference to the commentaries of Śaṃkara and MS.

The word *māyā* employed in the *BhG* texts has often been interpreted by Śaṃkara as consistent with his Advaitic doctrine of illusion. Sometime he equates it with *prakṛti* (e.g. on *BhG* 4.6, 7.14, 8.25, 18.61), which the *BhG* does not really

⁷⁴⁴ Zaehner 1969: p. 3.

⁷⁴⁵ Hill 1928: p. 274 and Feuerstein 1974: p. 32.

⁷⁴⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 2007: Vol. 1, Introduction, p. xvii.

⁷⁴⁷ 'Madhva's interpretations are so extravagant as to rob the commentary of much interest for the scholar' (Hill 1928: p. 274).

convey. Like Śaṃkara, MS also makes a similar attempt to interpret these verses. The word *bhakti* uttered in various verses of the *BhG* (e.g. *BhG* 8.22, 9.14, 9. 26, 9.29, 18.54, 18.55, 18.66) has been explained by Śaṃkara either as knowledge, or he just gives its prosaic meaning. This has also been pointed out by critics. As seen earlier, MS sometimes disagrees with Śaṃkara in explaining these verses, with a view to lend support to devotion. The concept of *brahman* has also been interpreted by Śaṃkara as the absolute reality that may be both qualified and unqualified, in accordance with his philosophical views, often ignoring the intent of the text (e.g. on *BhG* 4.24, 5.6, 14.27).⁷⁴⁸ As stated earlier, MS also follows Śaṃkara's lead in explaining these verses.

6.2. Śaṃkara's commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* of Madhusūana

We have seen that in both the introductory and concluding verses of the *GD*, MS has ungrudgingly accepted the lead of Śaṃkara.⁷⁴⁹ Nevertheless, his disagreements with Śaṃkara are at times conspicuous in his commentary, though, as pointed out earlier, 'disagreement' needs to be viewed here in terms of their interpretation of the *BhG* text, and not of their understanding of the Advaita doctrine. We have already discussed their respective views on the important metaphysical entities admitted in the *BhG*, and also the nature of liberation and the means to its attainment. A few important examples will suffice to establish the point under discussion. And in this connection, we mention below in the next two sections the

⁷⁴⁸ See Mainkar 1969: pp. 6-11, 12-8, 19-25 ff.

⁷⁴⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 1 and 775.

places in the *GD* where MS has explicitly referred to the comments on the *BhG*, *BS*, and the Upaniṣads by Śaṃkara.

Besides the two references to Śaṃkara by MS in his *GD* in the introductory and concluding verses as cited above, we find as many as twenty seven places where MS has mentioned Śaṃkara's commentary on the *BhG*. Thus, while explaining the eternality and indestructibility of the self in *BhG* 2.25, MS has quoted Śaṃkara's comments on *BhG* 2.24 in order to substantiate his view. In support of explaining the sequence of birth and death of the eternal self (in a sense of the individual self) in *BhG* 2.27, MS has agreed with the comments of Śaṃkara on the same verse. MS maintains in *BhG* 2.41 that the knowledge of the self (*sāṃkhya-buddhi*) and that of the *yoga* (i.e. *karma-yoga*) are of the nature of certainty (*vyavasāyātmikā*) because they, being of the same kind and producing the same result, sublimate all the contrary ideas and are brought forth from perfect Vedic sentences (i.e. the great sentences like 'that thou art' etc.); while the thoughts of those who do not have certainty about the self (*avyavasāyin-s*) get sublated. MS adds that this is the view that is held by Śaṃkara as well.⁷⁵⁰ In the course of explaining *BhG* 2.48: 'Abandon self-interest, Dhanamjaya, and perform the acts while applying this single-mindedness. Remain equable in success and failure -- this equableness is called the application', MS, in response to the objection as to how the sense of the word *yoga* that was previously explained as meaning action meant before can be reconciled with its present sense that 'perform the acts while applying this single-mindedness', maintains that here equanimity is called *yoga*. As

⁷⁵⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 81 and *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 79-80; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 83 and *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, p. 82; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 100 and *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 99-100.

‘equable in success and failure’ is meant as *yoga* in the word ‘single-mindedness’ (*yogastha*) in the verse, and not action; there remains no contradiction at all. MS continues by saying that, in Śaṅkara’s interpretation, the first half of the verse (i.e. perform the acts...single mindedness) is explained by the second half (i.e. remain equable in success and failure...application), the fallacy of repetition is absent here. In support of his view regarding the possibility of the continuity of such happiness, which is of the nature of euphoria that is due to the mental modification born of *tamas* (*utphullatārūpā-tāmasī-cittavṛtti*), MS has quoted Śaṅkara’s definition of the expression ‘without craving for pleasure’ (*vigata-spr̥ha*) that occurs in the verse *BhG* 2.56.⁷⁵¹

In the *GD* on *BhG* 3.2, in relation to Arjuna’s question to the Lord as to which one among two incompatible things, viz. the steadfastness in knowledge (*jñāna-niṣṭhā*) and that in action (*karma-niṣṭhā*), is appropriate for the respective eligible persons, MS’s humble submission is that he need not elaborate this point as Śaṅkara has already refuted the views of the opponents in greater detail with the support of Śruti, Smṛti, and logic. It is worthwhile to point out MS’s respect for the Lord as well as for the great predecessor Śaṅkara, even though his allegiance to the latter is not unconditional. MS maintains that he is elucidating the text of the *BhG* after taking into consideration the views of the earlier commentator Śaṅkara, and that he is merely explaining the intention of the Lord to refine his own speech. This indicates that MS wants to explain what the Lord means in the *BhG*, and that he need not always agree with what Śaṅkara reads in it.⁷⁵² While explaining the

⁷⁵¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 108 and *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 100-8; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 117 and *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 116.

⁷⁵² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 141 and *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 134-41.

Lord's intention in *BhG* 3.20 that Arjuna, being a *kṣatriya*, needs to undertake action, as he, unlike the Brahmins, is not eligible for *saṁnyāsa*; MS asserts that, in keeping with this intention of the Lord, Śaṁkara has ascertained that *saṁnyāsa* is meant for the Brahmins only, and not for others (e.g. *MuUB* on *MuU* 1.12, *BUB* on *BU* 1.4.11),⁷⁵³ though Sureśvara has made a 'bold assertion' by including in the list of persons eligible for *saṁnyāsa* the *kṣatriya*-s and *vaiśya*-s as well.⁷⁵⁴

In connection with the Lord's assertion in *BhG* 4.6 that, though he is unborn and imperishable, he takes on birth out of his own free will (*ātma-māyā*), MS has defended his interpretation by referring to Śaṁkara's explanation of it. In the course of explaining the expressions 'inaction in action' etc. in *BhG* 4.18, MS has remarked that, since Śaṁkara has explained elaborately the intention of the Lord expressed in this connection, he himself is desisting from further elucidation. Again, in support of his views on *BhG* 4.21, MS refers to Śaṁkara's elucidation on the same verse. While defending his interpretation of *BhG* 4.24, MS has mentioned the view of Śaṁkara that meditation through superimposition for a particular result without abandoning the accessories like ladle etc. (i.e. *sampad-upāsanā*) is inappropriate for attaining the knowledge of *brahman*.⁷⁵⁵

Having referred to Śaṁkara's comments on *BhG* 6.14: 'Serene, fearless, faithful to his vow of chastity, and restraining his thinking, let him sit yoked, his thought on me, his intention focused on me', MS states that it is the view of Śaṁkara that the *yogin*, having fixed his mind on the Lord and having accepted the

⁷⁵³ *Śrīśaṁkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, pp. 336-8, vol. 10, pp. 143-6.

⁷⁵⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 160.

⁷⁵⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 188 and *Śrīmacchaṁkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, pp. 4-5; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 208 and *Śrīmacchaṁkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 200-9; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 212-3 and *Śrīmacchaṁkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 211-3; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 219 and *Śrīmacchaṁkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 217-9.

Lord as the supreme, should think of the Lord alone as the highest object of worship (*sarvārādhyā*), unlike some person who may passionately have his mind fixed on his wife, but accepts another, a king or a deity, as the highest goal to be achieved. MS, now compares himself with a berry (*guñjā-phala*) and Śaṅkara with gold, hinting at his disagreement in this context with Śaṅkara with explicit humility. MS maintains that, though both Śaṅkara and he have commented upon the *BhG*, yet his own elucidation can no way be compared with that of Śaṅkara in importance and value (just as though berry fruit may be placed with gold in the same scale for weighing the latter, it can never be the same in worth and quality with gold), thereby indicating that, though he may have offered a different explanation of this verse, it is too insignificant when compared with the explanation of Śaṅkara. Thus, the simile has been given by MS to justify the fact that, while Śaṅkara's elucidation on the verse is closer to his non-dualistic stance, MS finds support in this verse for his devotional stance when he holds that the mind, being free from all modifications in the form of object, attains a stream of mental modifications about the Lord (*madviṣayaka-dhārāvāhika-cittavṛtti*).⁷⁵⁶ In the context of *BhG* 6.29, MS refers to Śaṅkara as giving only a lesser importance to the *yogic* path for the Advaitins, in the process of realising supreme reality.⁷⁵⁷ In his comments on *BhG* 6.34 as well, MS, in order to explain the nature of the mind, which is indeed fickle, turbulent, domineering, and tough as stated in this verse, has referred to Śaṅkara's simile of *tantu-nāga* (a kind of shark; or according to MS, a kind of magical noose or a

⁷⁵⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 298 and *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 298-9.

⁷⁵⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 319.

creature named Tāntanī living in big lakes in Gujarat etc.) that illustrates the nature of the mind in this context.⁷⁵⁸

Commenting on *BhG* 13.2, MS says that the actual relation between the individual-self (i.e. *kṣetra* in this context) and the supreme-self (*kṣetrajña* in this context) is one of identity only, referring to Śaṃkara, who has dealt with this point with sufficient argumentation. MS points out that he refrains from further elaboration here in order to not make the *GD* unduly voluminous. On *BhG* 13.12, MS says that no word in its primary sense (*mukhya-vṛtti*) can refer to *brahman*, which can only be indicated in the secondary sense of the words in scriptural citations, referring the reader to Śaṃkara for greater details.⁷⁵⁹

While explaining the meaning of the verse *BhG* 17.10, MS has referred to Śaṃkara's comments on the same in support of his own view.⁷⁶⁰ In the same manner, while commenting on *BhG* 17.16, MS has validated his stance by referring to the views of Śaṃkara. Again, while explaining *BhG* 17.28, MS has sought support for his views with the help of Śaṃkara's comments on this verse.⁷⁶¹

To explain *BhG* 18.6: 'It is my final judgement, Pārtha, that these acts are to be performed, but with the performer renouncing all self-interest in them and all their rewards', MS maintains that the Lord's firm intent in this verse is that between the two views, viz. whether actions are to be abandoned or not by those who are eligible for them, the second view is to be accepted. Actions such as sacrifice etc.,

⁷⁵⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, p. 326.

⁷⁵⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 531-9 and *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 523-38; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 554 and *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 550-3.

⁷⁶⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 660 and *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 659-60.

⁷⁶¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, p. 664; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 671 and *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 670-1.

even though they cause bondage when preceded by the desire for their result, are to be performed without a sense of attachment to them by the seeker after liberation, as performance of these actions purify one's mind, and is thus conducive to knowledge. MS reiterates that the same view has been put forth by Śaṃkara in his comments on this verse of the *BhG*. But people of dull intellect fail to grasp it, as they lack expertise in it (i.e. Śaṃkara's comments on the *BhG*).⁷⁶²

In the course of explaining *BhG* 18.12: 'Now there are three kinds of fruits to an act: disagreeable, agreeable, and mixed; but such is the *karman* of the nonrenouncers hereafter, but never of the renouncers', MS has declared Śaṃkara's explanation of this verse as highly superior, beside referring to the latter's comments on *BS* 3.1.8 in support of his own position. In support of his own comments on *BhG* 18.14 as well, MS has referred to Śaṃkara's elucidation on this verse. Again, while commenting on *BhG* 18.37, MS mentions that in this connection he is holding the same view as that of Śaṃkara. As explained earlier in detail, MS in his comments on *BhG* 18.66 has expressed his disagreement with Śaṃkara (the reason of which is MS's relative faithfulness to the path of devotion) in a more polite manner. In the course of his comments on *BhG* 18.67: 'This is not to be revealed, ever, to one without austerities or devotion to me, nor to one who does not wish to listen or who disbelieves in me', MS, in order to validate his preference for devotion, has pointed out that, in spite of alternative readings in this verse, viz. 'a man of intellect' (*medhāvin*) and 'an ascetic' (*tapasvin*), Śaṃkara has maintained that, in order to be eligible to know the secret teaching of the *BhG*, both these aspirants are to possess the qualities of having love for the Lord

⁷⁶² *Bhagavadgītā* 1999; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 682 and *Śrīmacchāṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 681-2.

(*bhagavadanurakti*), love for the teacher (*guru-bhakti*), and service to them (*śuśruṣā*). Further, while commenting on *BhG* 18.75, MS has pointed out a different reading (*pāṭha-bheda*) in the verse (i.e. ‘*imam*’) as admitted by Śaṅkara. He, however, has justified Śaṅkara on the ground that the acceptance of this different reading does not change the overall meaning of the verse in any way.⁷⁶³

In addition to such cases, we may refer to the *GD* on a few other verses that may be relevant to this section.

Thus, while explaining *BhG* 2.29, ‘It is by a rare chance that a man does see him, It is a rarity too if another proclaims him, A rare chance that someone else will hear him, And even if hearing him no one knows him’, MS explains the expression ‘another proclaims him’ (*anyaḥ vadati enam*) in the verse as some one who is different from all ignorant people, and not the one who is different from all those who visualise the self, because the acceptance of the latter one would lead to a contradiction (*vyāghāta*). MS maintains that, if one knows the self, then he usually remains self-absorbed, and hence, does not talk about the self. Even if he talks about the self out of sheer compassion, that sort of person, like the Lord, is rare to find. But Śaṅkara means by the same expression simply someone who talks about the self. Again, MS’s explanation of the remaining expression in the verse also does not go all the way along the interpretation of Śaṅkara. In this connection, MS has pleaded with the learned for excusing him for his immodesty. Again, in his

⁷⁶³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 691 and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 690-2; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 695; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 718-9; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 755 and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 751-5; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 760-1 and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 766; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 772 and *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 771-2.

comments on *BhG* 2.39: ‘This is the spirit according to theory; now hear how this spirit applies in practice, yoked with which you will cut away the bondage of the act’, MS seems to have deviated from the views of Śaṅkara. While Śaṅkara maintains that Arjuna was to get rid of bondage, which is caused by action, through attaining knowledge by the grace of the Lord, MS finds fault with this explanation of the predecessors (*prācīna-vyākhyā*), as he thinks that this explanation involves the fault of supplying an ellipsis (*adhyāhāra-doṣa*), as in this case ‘obtaining the grace of the Lord’ becomes an unnecessary addition, and also that in the expression ‘bondage of the act’ (*karma-bandhana*) the term *karma* is redundant, as the term *bandhana* itself means the transmigratory bondage that is due to past action.⁷⁶⁴

Consider again, *BhG* 5.5: ‘The adepts of insight and the adepts of practice reach one and the same goal: he sees truly who sees that insight and practice are one and the same’ advocates that both the adepts of insight (*sāṅkhya-s*) and the adepts of practice (*yogin-s*) attain the same goal, i.e. ‘liberation’. While explaining the verse, both Śaṅkara and MS maintain that in order to obtain knowledge, the *yogin-s* perform the rites and duties prescribed by scriptures without expecting any result (*phala-abhisandhi-rahita*) from them, and with a sense of dedication to the Lord (*bhagavadarpaṇa-buddhi*), for Śaṅkara, the *yogin-s* attain liberation through the knowledge of reality and renunciation of all actions, MS’s explanation of this verse suggests that MS is more concerned with physical renunciation for the *yogin-s*. MS maintains that the *yogin-s*, with their minds purified, attain liberation through the steadfastness in knowledge, which is obtained in this life or the next through

⁷⁶⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 85-9; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 96-7 and *Śrīmacchāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 96-8 (Also see Gambhirananda 2000: Introduction, p. 18).

listening to scriptures (*śravaṇa*) etc., preceded by renunciation. Now, if this view of MS regarding the *yogin*-s is accepted, it would also apply to the *sāṃkhya*-s, who are also the renouncers established in knowledge -- a fact that does not seem to be acceptable to the other commentators of the *BhG* at large.⁷⁶⁵

Thus, a close study of all the references to Śaṃkara in the *GD* mentioned above indicates that, while writing the *GD*, MS had always before him the commentary on the *BhG* by Śaṃkara, and that it exerted immense influence on MS in establishing his own Advaitic interpretation in the *GD*. However, MS expressed his disagreement with Śaṃkara whenever the situation warranted it, i.e. mostly when he tried to lend his support to the path of devotion. However, as noted before, in so doing, MS might have occasionally admitted a different understanding of the text of the *BhG* from that of Śaṃkara, but he never disagreed with the latter's exposition of the Advaita philosophy.⁷⁶⁶

6.3. References to Śaṃkara's other commentaries in the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

Apart from the above references to the commentary on the *BhG* by Śaṃkara, we find in the *GD* on a number of verses of the *BhG* where MS has referred to

⁷⁶⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, p. 250 (Also see Marcaurelle 2000: pp. 196-7).

⁷⁶⁶ In some cases (e.g. in the *GD* on *BhG* 2.29, 2.39, 5.5. 3.2, 6.14, 6.29, 18.66), MS consciously departs from the interpretation offered by Śaṃkara, since after offering his own interpretation of the verses concerned, he mentions the different interpretation offered by Śaṃkara. But inspite of such mionor differences, he fully subscribes to the Advaita doctrine propagated by Śaṃkara, which holds (i) that the ultimate reality is pure consciousness that is without a second entity and also bereft of internal distinctions; (ii) that the individual self (*jīva*) has no reality over and above the reality of this absolute reality (*brahman*), and (iii) that the world is indescribable in terms of reality and unreality (*sadasadbhyām anirvacanīyatvam*). It is a fact that, while Śaṃkara admits knowledge (*jñāna*) as the sole means of attaining liberation, MS admits devotion (*bhakti*) as the means that is easier to be adopted by many spiritual aspirants. We have already shown that the monistic outlook of Advaita Vedānta is not inconsistent with the adoption of devotion (*bhakti*) and worship (*upāsana*) [See chapters 5.2.2.1, 5.2.2.2, 5.3 etc.].

Śaṃkara's comments on the *BS* and on the Upaniṣads in support of his own position. In his comments on *BhG* 2.17, MS has referred to *BSB* on *BS* 1.1.4.⁷⁶⁷ Again, the *GD* on *BhG* 2.18 refers to *BSB* in a general way;⁷⁶⁸ *GD* on *BhG* 3.34 refers to *BUB* on *BU* 1.3.1; *GD* on *BhG* 4.34 refers to *MUB* on *MU* 1.2.12; *GD* on *BhG* 4.37 refers to *BSB* on *BS* 3.3.32; *GD* on *BhG* 8.24 refers to *BSB* on *BS* 4.3.2; and the *GD* on *BhG* 18.12 refers to *BSB* on *BS* 3.1.8 in an implicit manner.⁷⁶⁹

6.4. Other commentators of the *Bhagavadgītā* referred to in the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

Besides Śaṃkara, a number of commentators of the *BhG* have been referred to by MS either explicitly or implicitly. They have either been criticised or referred to by MS in order to justify his own position. Among these commentators, mention may be made of the following:

Rāmānuja (11th century CE): As noted earlier, while supporting his own view on the concept of divine incarnation as expressed in *BhG* 4.6, MS refers to Śaṃkara and his commentator Ānandagiri, who hold that though the Lord is unborn and imperishable, he appears through his magical power (*māyā*) as if he is embodied. MS also puts forth a different view, to whom there cannot be any relation of a body and its possessor (*deha-dehi-bhāva*) in the case of the supreme Lord. Lord Vāsudeva who is the supreme self, eternal, omnipresent, an amalgam of

⁷⁶⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 61 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 1.1.4, p. 135.

⁷⁶⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 63.

⁷⁶⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 171 and *Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 10, *BUB* on *BU* 1.3.1, pp. 34-43; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 232 and *Śrīśaṃkaragranthāvali* 1999: Vol. 8, *MUB* on *MU* 1.2.12, pp. 336-8; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 235 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 3.3.12, pp. 816-8; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 405 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 4.3.2, pp. 987-9; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 691 and *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 3.1.8, pp. 666-70.

existence-conscious-bliss, full, and unconditioned, is himself the body of the supreme Lord, who has neither any material or *māyika* (i.e. caused by *māyā*) body. Having said so about the supreme Lord, who, according to the Advaitins, is eternal, partless, unchanging, and supreme bliss, MS mentions the view of those who admit the actuality of the relation of a body and its possessor even in the case of the supreme Lord. Therefore, MS opines that those who hold this view do not even deserve to be refuted.

This criticism is clearly directed against the supporters of the ‘qualified non-dualism’ like Rāmānuja etc., who accept three things as ultimate and real (*tattva-traya*), i.e. matter (*acit*), souls (*cit*), and God (*īśvara*). Though all the three realities are equally actual, yet the first two are totally dependent on the third reality, i.e. God, since the first two realities constitute the body of God, and God is their soul. God again is the soul of all souls.⁷⁷⁰

In *BhG* 5.7, MS explains the expression *sarva-bhūtātma-bhūtātmā* (identifying himself with the selves of all creatures) as meaning someone whose self (*ātmā*) or essential nature (*svarūpa*) becomes identified with all beings (*sarva-bhūtātmā*) and with the self (*ātma-bhūta*), i.e. one who sees all beings — sentient and insentient — as the self only. MS now finds faults with others whose explanation of this expression involves imperfect grammatical usage. He maintains that the explanation of the expression as whose self becomes the self of all beings (*sarveṣāṃ bhūtānāmātmabhūta ātmā*) can be obtained from the first part of the expression, i.e. *sarva-bhūtātmā* (one who is the self of all beings) only, and therefore, the remainder of the expression, viz. *ātma-bhūta* (i.e. one who has

⁷⁷⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 188-90 and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyopodghāṭaḥ*, pp. 5-6; *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, pp. 79, 91, 366-8 etc. (Also see Sharma 1976: p. 346).

become the self) becomes superfluous. MS, however, suggests that this redundancy can be avoided if the term *sarvātmā* is taken in the sense of insentient and sentient respectively, i.e. *sarva* is taken as insentient, and *ātmā* as sentient. This criticism seems to be directed against Rāmānuja, who explains this expression as one whose self becomes the self of all embodied beings like gods etc.⁷⁷¹

The expression *anādimat param brahma* (beginningless supreme *brahman*) in *BhG* 13.12 has been explained by MS as meaning the beginningless supreme or all-surpassing *brahman*, which is in no way limited by anything, and which is the supreme self. MS also maintains that though the meaning can be had from mere use of the word *anādi* (beginningless) in the sense of an adjectival compound (*bahuvrihi-samāsa*) [i.e. that which has no beginning (*ādi*) is beginningless (*anādi*)], yet, in order to indicate superiority (*atiśāyana*) or constant connection (*nitya-yoga*), the possessive suffix *matup* (i.e. *mat*) has been used here (i.e. *anādi+mat=anādimat*).⁷⁷² MS then mentions those commentators who prefer to explain this expression by splitting it in two other divisions, viz. *anādi* (beginningless) and *matparam brahma* (*brahman* that is superior to me). MS maintains that, according to this explanation, by the term *matparam* is meant the unqualified *brahman* [i.e. that which is superior (*param*) to me (*mat*), i.e. the qualified *brahman* is the unqualified *brahman*]. Now, in order to justify his claim that the expression under discussion conveys the unqualified *brahman* only and not the qualified *brahman*, MS describes the second interpretation as a

⁷⁷¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 253-4 and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 435.

⁷⁷² It may be pointed out that if the word *anādi* (beginningless) is used in the expression, then it may indicate the unmanifest (*pradhāna*) of the Sāṃkhya school, which is also said to be beginningless in the process of evolution. So, in order to avoid this obscurity, the possessive suffix *mat* is added to the word *anādi* (See Gambhirananda 2000: Footnote 2, p. 722).

misinterpretation (*apavyākhyā*) of those according to whom the term *matparam* stands for the qualified *brahman*. He maintains that those who explain the expression as that *brahman*, of which Lord Vāsudeva [i.e. the referent of ‘I’ (*aham*)] is the supreme power, is erroneous; as in the context of the unqualified *brahman*, talking about its possession of prowess is incongruous.⁷⁷³

This view of MS can be explicated with the support of Śaṅkara’s explanation of *BhG* 13.12. Having interpreted the expression *anādimat param brahma* in the verse as the beginningless supreme *brahman*, Śaṅkara points out that some commentators explain the above expression *anādimat param* by splitting it up in a different manner into the two terms *anādi* and *matparam*. They, Śaṅkara says, argue that, if the meaning of a term can be obtained by treating that term as an adjectival compound, then the employment of the suffix (*mat*) after that term for obtaining that very meaning is not justified. Accordingly, the suffix *mat* employed in the term *anādimat* becomes superfluous, if both *anādimat* and *anādi* happen to convey the same meaning. They also justify themselves by maintaining that by *matparam* is meant that *brahman* of which Lord Vāsudeva is the supreme power. Now, Śaṅkara holds that this repetition could be avoided in the manner stated above only if the sense of being *brahman* that is qualified were intended here. But that is not so, as the sense of unqualified *brahman* is conveyed here. So, the possessive suffix and the adjectival compound convey here the same sense. The possessive suffix *mat* has been used here due to purely metrical reasons, i.e. for merely completing the verse.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷³ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 550-1.

⁷⁷⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīmacchaṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 551.

Now, while commenting on the same verse, Rāmānuja explains the expression *anādimat paraṁ brahma*, according to his own philosophical stance. Rāmānuja, with copious references to the *BhG* and the Śrutis, maintains that, that which has no beginning (*ādi*) is beginningless (*anādi*). As this indwelling self (*pratyagātman*) [i.e. the individual self] does not have any origination, it is also bereft of any end (*anta*). By the term *matparam*, Rāmānuja means ‘having me for the supreme’ (*ahaṁ paro yasya tanmatparam*), i.e. the soul to which ‘I’ (i.e. the supreme being Vāsudeva) is the *śeṣī* (i.e. the Lord and Master), as is attested by the *BhG*: ‘This is my lower nature, but know that I have another, higher nature which comprises the order of souls: it is by the latter that this world is sustained, strong-armed prince’ (*BhG* 7.5). By virtue of its being the body of the Lord and, the nature of the self finds its joy only in being dependent on the Lord. Thus, Rāmānuja did not find much difficulty in dealing with the grammatical inconsistency that apparently affects this verse, as for him the Lord possesses innumerable auspicious qualities.⁷⁷⁵

Though Śaṅkara and, subsequently, MS have not specifically mentioned the name of the opponent whose views they were referring to, it can be assumed that Śaṅkara was referring to some school of the Bhedābheda-vādins, who disallowed attributes to *brahman* but admitted supreme power in it.⁷⁷⁶ We find that

⁷⁷⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 3, *Rāmānujabhāṣyam*, p. 49 (Also refer to Bhavani 1995: p. 387, Sampatkumaran 1969: Footnote 660, p. 376).

This edition (i.e. *Bhagavadgītā* 2000) of the *BhG* counts this verse as *BhG* 13.13 instead of *BhG* 13.12, as the verse *BhG* 13.1 that is printed in this edition is not generally taken by other commentators excepting Puruṣottama-jī of the Śuddhādvaita school and Rāghavendra Yati and a few other commentators of the Dvaita school, and so is not available in general editions of the *BhG*. Though this verse *BhG* 13.1 is found in an edition containing Viśvanātha Cakravartin’s commentary, it is not clear whether Cakravartin has commented on this verse or he has started his commentary taking only the generally accepted 1st verse of this chapter) [See *Bhagavadgītā* 2001: Vol.3; 2007: Vol. 2; *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Sārārthavarṣiṇī*, p. 344].

⁷⁷⁶ See Sampatkumaran 1969: Footnote 660, p. 376.

later, Rāmānuja too interpreted the term *matparam* in the manner against which both Śaṃkara and MS (subsequent to Rāmānuja) have raised objections.

Jaya Tīrtha (1370 CE, a commentator of Madhva's *Gītābhāṣya*):

Madhva in his commentary on the *BhG* explains the term *anādimat* in *BhG* 13.12 as 'being devoid of body that has a beginning' (*ādimaddehavarjitamityanādimat*). While commenting on Madhva's *Gītābhāṣya* on this verse of the *BhG*, Jayatīrtha, having dealt with elaborately the grammatical objection involved therein, agrees with what Śaṃkara and MS (subsequent to Jayatīrtha) hold in this connection.⁷⁷⁷

Ānandagiri (14th century CE, a commentator of Śaṃkara's *Gītābhāṣya*):

This writer is well known in the Advaita tradition as a dependable commentator of Śaṃkara's works. MS has referred to him for establishing Śaṃkara's position that in turn helps MS in supporting his own position. As discussed earlier, while establishing his own view on the concept of divine incarnation as enunciated in *BhG* 4.6, MS refers to Śaṃkara and explicates the master's stance by referring to the view of Ānandagiri. Further, MS quotes the views of the commentators of Śaṃkara (such as Ānandagiri etc.) while justifying Śaṃkara's adoption of a different reading in *BhG* 18.75.⁷⁷⁸

Śrīdhara Svāmin (14th century CE, a famous commentator of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and an adherent to Śaṃkara's Advaita school): While explaining *BhG* 2.41: 'This one spirit is defined here as singleness of purpose, scion of Kuru, whereas the spirits of those who are not purposeful are countless and...',

⁷⁷⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 3, *Mādhvabhāṣyam* and *Prameyadīpikā* thereon by Jaya Tīrtha, p. 50.

⁷⁷⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: Compare *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 188 with *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyopakramaṇikā*, pp. 4-5 and *Ānandagirivyākhyā*, pp. 186-90. Again, compare *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 772 with *Śrīmacchaṃkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 771-2 and *Ānandagirivyākhyā*, p. 771.

MS, following Śaṅkara, maintains that, while the knowledge of the self (*sāṃkhya-buddhi*) and that of the *yoga* (i.e. *karma-yoga*) are of the nature of certainty (*vyāvasāyātmikā*) as they negate all the contrary ideas and are brought about from the faultless sentences (i.e. the Upaniṣadic great sentences), the thoughts of those who lack conviction about the self (*avyāvasāyin-s*) are normally negated. MS adds that, on the other hand, there are some commentators of the *BhG* who hold that one would cross the transmigratory world only through worshipping the supreme Lord, and that this kind of one-sided view is the product of *karma-yoga*. In a bit of antagonistic attitude to this view of other commentators, MS proclaims the superiority of *jñāna-kāṇḍa* of the Vedas to their ritualistic portion. Again, Śrīdhara Svāmin, in his comments on this verse, holds clearly the opinion that has been called by MS ‘the view of others’. Thus, it is obvious that MS, being faithful to his own non-dualistic stance, was not ready to accept ungrudgingly the view of Śrīdhara that worship of the Lord, as brought about by *karma-yoga*, leads to the attainment of liberation. While explaining the expression *sarvabhūtātmanabhūtātma* (identifying himself with the selves of all creatures) in *BhG* 5.7, MS’s criticism directed against Rāmānuja that we have discussed earlier, is also pointed at Śrīdhara, who also, like Rāmānuja, explains the expression as meaning one whose self becomes the self of all beings. MS has also noted a different reading that Śrīdhara admits in *BhG* 6.27, though he has not expressed any opinion about it. Incidentally, it is the only place where MS refers by name to Śrīdhara. As discussed in connection with Rāmānuja, the antagonistic view held by both Śaṅkara and MS in course of explaining the expression *anādimat paraṃ brahma* (beginningless supreme *brahman*) in *BhG* 13.12, may also be aimed at Śrīdhara, since use of the

possessive suffix and the adjectival compound and explaining the term *matparam* to indicate the unqualified *brahman* (i.e. *brahman* that is considered superior to ‘I’ denoted by the qualified *brahman* is said to be the unqualified *brahman*) that has been criticised by MS is also found in toto in Śrīdhara’s comments on the same verse.⁷⁷⁹

While explaining *BhG* 15.16: ‘In this world there are two Persons, the transient and the intransient. The transient comprises all creatures, the intransient called the One-on-the-Peak’, MS maintains that that whatever is mutable, i.e. subject to destruction in the form of entirety of effects, is called *kṣara puruṣa* (transient person), while the indestructible (*vināśa-rahita*), the seed of origin of the *puruṣa* called *kṣara*, the divine power of *māyā*, is called *akṣara-puruṣa* (intransient person). That which presents the unreality by covering the reality is called *kūṭa*, which also means deceit (*vañcanā*), illusion (*māyā*) etc. Thus, that which exists with the twin powers of concealment and projection is called *kūṭastha*.⁷⁸⁰ It is the limiting adjuncts of cause (*kāraṇopādhi*) in the form of divine power of *māyā*. Being endless (*ananta*) as the cause of this empirical existence, it is called *akṣara*. Having said so, MS now refutes the view of other commentators on this point, who take the word *kṣara* (transient) to mean the aggregate of insentient beings, and refer to the individual selves as *akṣara* (intransient) while employing the expression ‘the

⁷⁷⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīdhārīvyākhyā*, pp. 99-100; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 253-4 and *Śrīdhārīvyākhyā*, p. 254; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīdhārīvyākhyā*, p. 314; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīdhārīvyākhyā*, pp. 550-2.

⁷⁸⁰ In this context it can be noted that Vidyāraṇya in his *PD* classifies the absolute consciousness into four types, viz. *kūṭastha-caitanya*, *brahma-caitanya*, *īśvara-caitanya*, and *jīva-caitanya*; just as ether is differentiated into ether in a pot (*ghaṭākāśa*), the omnipresent ether (*mahākāśa*), ether in water (*jalākāśa*), and ether in a cloud (*meghākāśa*) (*Pañcadaśī* 2008: *PD* 6.18, p. 112). Thus, *puruṣottama* means the unqualified *brahma caitanya*, *kūṭastha-caitanya* implies the *akṣara-puruṣa*, and the *kṣara-puruṣa* indicates *īśvara* (collective) and *jīva* (individualistic) *pratibimba caitanya* (reflected consciousness) respectively (For the views of *Vivaraṇa-kāra* and *Samkṣepa-śārīraka-kāra* in this context, also see Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 1029-30).

intransient is called the immutable' (*kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate*). MS points out that it is the knower of the field (*kṣetrajñā*) that is spoken of (by the Lord himself) as the supreme person (*puruṣottama*) in this context (i.e. in *BhG* 15.17). MS, thus, reiterates that by the words *kṣara* and *akṣara* are meant the insentient in the form of both limiting adjuncts of cause (*kāraṇopādhi*) and effect (*kāryopādhi*). This is directed against Śrīdhara, who explains the verse in the way against which MS raises some objections. MS has also verbatim some words of Śrīdhara in the *GD* on *BhG* 17.10, in support of his own view. In course of explaining the term *saṁnyāsin* employed in *BhG* 18.12 in two senses — viz. primary and secondary, MS maintains that, one who is embodied and devoid of the knowledge of the supreme self, and yet undertakes actions without craving for their results, is a *saṁnyāsin* in a secondary sense; while the other one, who possesses the knowledge of the supreme self and being bereft of the sense of identification with the body, renounces all actions, is a *saṁnyāsin* in the primary sense. While renunciation of craving for results of actions is common in both the senses of the word (i.e. *saṁnyāsin*), the performer of action (*karmin*) is referred to by the word *saṁnyāsin*. This has the support of *BhG* 6.1: 'He who performs the task set for him without interest in its fruit is the true renouncer and yogin, not the one who does not maintain the fire and fails to perform the rites.' MS notes here that, some of the commentators also maintain this view with the support of this same *BhG* verse. It may be noted here that Śrīdhara has also offered a similar explanation.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁸¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, pp. 627-8; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* and *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, pp. 660; *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 691 and *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, pp. 691-2.

6.5. *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* referred to in other commentaries on the *Bhagavadgītā*

In later commentarial literature on the *BhG*, we find explicit reference to the *GD* in some of the subsequent commentaries. Such cases are noted below.

Veṅkaṭanātha (16th century CE, a proponent of the Advaita school of Śaṃkara): As we have discussed in chapter three in connection with explaining *BhG* 2.16 and 2.18, Veṅkaṭanātha, though an adherent to Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta, finds flaws in many places in MS's comments on the *BhG*. Besides these two instances, Veṅkaṭanātha also refers by name to MS while commenting on *BhG* 1.27, 2.8, 2.11, 2.13, 2.31, 3.28, 4.10, 5.8, 8.1 etc., and repudiates the latter's view with a number of arguments, while accepting in almost all cases the view of Śaṃkara. He thereby indicates his full support to the great master of the tradition, with an eye to critically assess the views of MS, who himself is a pioneer in the same tradition in his own right.⁷⁸²

Due to paucity of space, we note here only some of the major objections that have been raised by Veṅkaṭanātha in his commentary *Brahmānandagiri* against the interpretation of the *BhG* provided by MS.

(i) It has already been stated that according to MS, the *BhG* can be divided into three parts, each of them consisting of six chapters. MS also maintains that these three parts, when taken together, reveal the indented meaning of the 'great sentence' 'That thou art' (*tattvamasi*, CU 6.8.7). According to MS, the first part deals with *karma*, the third part deals with *jñāna*, while the second part deals with *bhakti*, which acts as a bridge between *karma* and *jñāna*. MS also says that the first part elucidates the nature of the meaning of 'thou' (*tvam*), the second part deals

⁷⁸² *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Brahmānandagiri*, pp. 47-8, 69-70, 81-2, 95, 107-8, 118, 170, 322, 378-9, 476-7; vol. 2, p. 68.

with the nature of the meaning of ‘that’ (*tat*), and the third part shows the identity of these two meanings. Veṅkaṭanātha remarks that such interpretations are unsatisfactory, as there is no clear statement in the *BhG* to this effect.

(ii) While explaining the phrase, ‘*kṛpayā parayāviṣṭaḥ*’ that occurs in *BhG* 1.27, MS maintains that, here, the word ‘*kṛpā*’ stands for compassion that was by its very nature present (*svatasiddha*) in Arjuna. Veṅkaṭanātha holds that, in the context in question, the compassion spoken of here must have people like Bhīṣma etc. as its object, and hence, this not the spontaneous compassion that Arjuna might have for people who were poor, or helpless, or those who has sought for refuge (*dīnanātha-sāraṇāgati*), since in that case, Arjuna would not even have come to the battlefield. Hence, *kṛpā* here stands for a temporary mental state caused by delusion (*āgantukaḥ mohavikāraḥ*).

(iii) While explaining the hemistich *gatāsūnagatāsūṃśca nānuśocanti paṇḍitaḥ* in *BhG* 2.11, MS maintains that while *gatāsūn* stands for people who are dead, *agatāsūn* stands for the living relatives of those who are dead, and sorrow (*śoka*) for them is of the form -- ‘how can there people survive after the death of their dear ones?’ Veṅkaṭanātha points out that in view of the expression *dṛṣṭvemaṃ svajanam* etc. that occurs in *BhG* 1.28, the sorrow spoken of here is related to relatives of Arjuna who are still living, but are about to be killed in the war. Thus, the explanation given by MS is not satisfactory.

(iv) While explaining the hemistich *dehino’smin yathā dehe kaumāraṃ yauvanaṃ jarā* that occurs in *BhG* 2.13, MS says that the word *dehin*, which is used here in the singular number, is present for the single self that persists in the body through the phases of childhood, youth, and old age that characterise the latter.

Likewise, the single self (i.e. *brahman*), on account of its all-pervasiveness (*vibhutva*) is present in all the bodies, and hence, the distinction that Arjuna draws between one who is killed (*vadhya*) and one who kills (*ghātaka*) is illusory in nature. Venkaṭanātha points out that, the verse does not speak of all bodies, and moreover, MS has to supply the probans, viz. all-pervasiveness (*vibhutva*) through ellipsis (*adhyāropa*). Hence, the literal meaning of this verse should be accepted here.

(v) While explaining the expression *antavanta ime dehāḥ* etc. that occurs in *BhG* 2.18, MS maintains that, the word *dehāḥ*, which is in plural number, stands for all the three types of body admitted in Advaita metaphysics, viz. gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*), subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*), and ‘causal’ body (*kāraṇa-śarīra*) that are composed by five sheaths (*pañca-koṣātmakaḥ*). Venkaṭanātha rejects this interpretation on the ground that from the context it is evident that Arjuna’s grief was caused by the very thought of destroying the gross bodies of relatives like Bhīṣma etc. that are characterised by the physical or material sheath (*annamaya-koṣa*), since the subtle body of a person characterised by the three other sheaths [viz. vital sheath (*prāṇamaya-koṣa*), mental sheath (*manomaya-koṣa*), and consciousness sheath (*vijñānamaya-koṣa*)] as well as the ‘causal’ body characterised by the bliss sheath (*ānandamaya-koṣa*) persist till the liberation of that person, and hence, the question of Arjuna’s grief being caused by the thought about the future destruction of such bodies in the war does not arise in the first place.⁷⁸³

Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri (ca. 16th century CE, the famous commentator of the *Mahābhārata* and a supporter of Śaṅkara’s Advaita school): Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri, an

⁷⁸³ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Brahmānandagiri*, pp. 18, 47-8, 81-2, 95, 118.

adherent to the Advaita Vedānta school, criticises any contrary position in his *Śrīmadbhagavadgītārthaprakāśa*, which is a commentary on the *BhG*, and is also a part of his commentary on the *MBh*, called the *Bhāratabhāvadīpa*. In addition to the introductory verses 2, 3, and 5 of this work which bear the substantial similarity with the introductory verses 3 and 4 of the *GD*,⁷⁸⁴ we find several places in his commentary on the *BhG* where Nīlakaṇṭha, along with the other commentators of the *BhG* like Śaṃkara,⁷⁸⁵ Śrīdhara⁷⁸⁶ etc., refers also to MS [e.g. *BhG* 2.20, 3.28 (only place where MS is referred to by name by Nīlakaṇṭha), 4.18, 6.29, 10.6, 10.21, 17.6, 18.10, 18.25].⁷⁸⁷

Vallabhācārya (17th century CE, the fifth grandson of the founder of the Śuddhādvaita school, Vallabhācārya): As has been stated before, Vallabhācārya, who is a theistic Vedāntin, finds fault with MS's comments on *BhG* 7.14. The verse in question speaks about different kinds of worshippers, who have performed virtuous deeds, viz. the suffering, the seekers for knowledge, the seekers for prosperity, and the wise. MS, following the *BP* and the other *Smṛtis*, names Gajendra, Śaunaka, Dhruva, Śuka, *gopī*-s etc. as representative examples of such devotees. Vallabhācārya, while commenting on the same verse, states in accordance

⁷⁸⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Nīlakaṇṭhavyākhyā* (Caturdharī), pp. 2-5 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁵ In *BhG* 2.43-44, 67; 3.28; 4.1, 4.6, 4.11, 4.18, 22, 35; 5.7; 6.29, 7.25, 8.3, 9.4, 10.20, 13.13, 13.14, 13.20, 13.22, 14.2, 17.1, 17.10, 17.25, 18.10, 18.18, 18.61 [*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Nīlakaṇṭhavyākhyā* (Caturdharī), pp. 102-3, 126, 164, 182, 190, 194, 207, 214, 233, 253-4, 370, 379, 414, 455, 555, 558, 568, 570, 588, 653, 660, 669, 688-9, 703, and 748].

⁷⁸⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Nīlakaṇṭhavyākhyā* (Caturdharī), pp. 657 and 712; and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Śrīdharīvyākhyā*, pp. 657-8 and 712.

⁷⁸⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Nīlakaṇṭhavyākhyā* (Caturdharī), pp. 70, 164, 207, 317-8, 445-6, 455-6, 657, 688, and 712; and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 68, 164, 298, 318, 445-6, 455, 657, 687-9, and 712.

Besides, compare 'anye tu', p. 188; comments on *BhG* 6.29, pp. 316-20; 'mathitadugdhādītyanye', p. 660; 'atra kaścidāha', p. 691; 'na nīradhārī bhavati' (MS refers to Śrīdhara by 'bhavat' and Nīlakaṇṭha refers to Śrīdhara by 'anye tu' in turn, p. 691) in *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā* with pp. 316-20, pp. 185-90, p. 660, pp. 690-2 in *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Nīlakaṇṭhavyākhyā* (Caturdharī).

with his doctrinal consideration and also with the support of the *BP*, that though other devotees such as Śaunaka, Dhruva, Śuka undertook virtuous deeds; the *gopī*-s, despite having performed no such virtuous deeds either in this life or in the past ones, could avail mystic yearning and love through the grace (*puṣṭi* or *prasāda*) of the Lord only.⁷⁸⁸

Puruṣottamajī (18th century CE, a proponent of the Śuddhādvaita school): As we have mentioned earlier, Puruṣottamajī, a follower of the Śuddhādvaita school of Vedānta, finds flaws in MS's commentary on the *BhG*. In the introduction to his *BhG* commentary, which is called the *Amṛtataraṅginī*, Puruṣottamajī has expressed the view with the support of the *Anugītā* etc. that the *BhG* teaches *śaraṇagamana*, and not *jñāna* and *saṁnyāsa*, as has been claimed by Śaṁkara. Again, Puruṣottamajī, quoting the introductory verses 3-10 of the *GD*, holds that MS's assertion about the tripartite division of the Vedas into *karma*, *upāsana*, and *jñāna* correspond to each six chapters of the *BhG* respectively and establish the import of 'tattvamasi' is not supported by the text (i.e. the *BhG*) commented on. He says that, the term *śaraṇa* in *BhG* 18.66 needs to be admitted in its primary meaning as 'house', 'protector' etc. as cited in the *Amarakoṣa* 3.3.52, in stead of admitting it in its secondary meaning. It may be pointed out in this connection that, though Puruṣottamajī has criticised Śaṁkara and MS, yet he has referred to Śrīdhara and Rāmānuja in support of his own position.⁷⁸⁹

Viśvanātha Cakravartin (18th century CE, an exponent of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism): As noted earlier, there are many places in Viśvanātha Cakravartin's commentary on the *BhG*, where the author reproduces verbatim from MS's *GD* in

⁷⁸⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 362-3 and *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 2, *Tattvadīpikā* of Vallabhācārya, p. 38.

⁷⁸⁹ *Bhagavadgītā* 2000: Vol. 1, *Puruṣottamajīkṛtā'mṛtataraṅginīyupodghātaḥ*, p. 18.

support of his own position. Besides offering almost a similar classification of *bhakti* in the introduction as also in his commentary on *BhG* 7.16 [Whereas MS classifies it into *karma-miśrā*, *jñāna-miśrā*, and *śuddhā*, Viśvanātha classifies *bhakti*, in connection with describing the four types of people of virtuous deeds (*BhG* 7.16), into *pradhānībhūtā* -- *karma-miśrā*, *jñāna-miśrā*, and *yoga-miśrā*; and *kevalā bhakti*].⁷⁹⁰ Viśvanātha refers by name to MS in *BhG* 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, 4.36, 7.7, 8.18, 9.15, 13.10, 14.26, 14.27, 15.18 etc.⁷⁹¹ Viśvanātha refers to MS in his commentary on *BhG* 4.6, 4.9 along with Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara, while in the course of explaining *BhG* 14.26-27, 15.18 he mentions MS along with Śrīdhara. Viśvanātha has explored the possibility of showing that MS's *GD* is not in extreme opposition to the views of Rāmānuja and Śrīdhara.

The following commentators have referred to MS's *GD* in an implicit manner in their respective commentaries on the *BhG*, as can be inferred from the almost verbatim reproduction of the passages of the *GD* in such works.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (18th century CE, a disciple of Viśvanātha Cakravartin, and an advocate of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism): Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who is considered a systematic propounder of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism through his comments on the Upaniṣads, *BS*, and the *BhG*, has referred to MS indirectly in his commentary on the *BhG*, which is named as the *Gītābhūṣaṇa*. In his comments on *BhG* 1.1, Baladeva cites MS's definition of Kurukṣetra based on the *Jabala Upaniṣad*. In *BhG* 4.6, Baladeva uses MS's comparison of the rising sun to the appearance of the Lord that has been provided in

⁷⁹⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Sārāsthavarṣiṇī*, pp. 2, 206-207 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, introductory verse 7, comments on *BhG* 7.16, pp. 3 and 362-3.

⁷⁹¹ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Sārāsthavarṣiṇī*, pp. 120, 122, 123-124, 142-143, 199, 232, 253-254, 352, 385, 387-388, and 404.

connection with the latter's comments on *BhG* 4.5. While explaining the concept of *māyā* stated in *BhG* 7.14, Baladeva uses the same Upaniṣadic text (i.e. *ŚU* 4.10) as is used by MS in the same context, while the former's elucidation on this verse is substantially similar to that of the latter.⁷⁹²

MS's classification of *bhakti* into *karma-miśrā*, *jñāna-miśrā*, and *śuddhā* cited in one of the introductory verses of the *GD* is also admitted by Baladeva throughout his commentary on the *BhG*, in a modified form that is similar to the classification given by Viśvanātha (e.g. *BhG* 6.47, 8.10, 9.15, 12.1). Besides, as we have noted earlier, while explaining the four kinds of people of virtuous deeds (*sukṛtin-s*), viz. the suffering (*ārta*), the seekers for knowledge (*jñāsu*), the seekers for prosperity (*arthārthin-s*), and the wise (*jñānin-s*) mentioned in *BhG* 7.16, MS characterises the first three types of people as those devotees who possess desire (*sakāma*), and the fourth type as those who have no interest for the fruit of their action (*niṣkāma*); while the latter are again classified into (i) those who are endowed with knowledge (*niṣkāma-bhakta-jñānī*), and (ii) those who possess disinterested and pure love (*niṣkāma-śuddha-prema-bhakta*). Unlike Viśvanātha, Baladeva reflects upon the elucidation of MS on this verse, yet he does not classify the devotees with the help of specific names; for he describes them differently as *saniṣṭha* (i.e. performers of *niṣkāma-karma-yoga*, followed by *jñāna-yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, and finally *bhakti-yoga*), *pariniṣṭha* (i.e. those who engage in the devotional processes of hearing and chanting as their main *sādhana*), *nirapekṣa* or *niṣkāma* (i.e. those who perform only *bhakti*, and reject *varṇāśrama-dharma*), and devotees, who are attached to the performance of *varṇāśrama-dharma* (e.g. *BhG* 3.25, 7.30,

⁷⁹² *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Gītābhūṣaṇa*, pp. 6, 121, and 204 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 9, 186, and 357.

9.27, 12.13-14, 18.64). It is to be noted that, though Baladeva in his comments on *BhG* 7.30 enumerates five types of devotees (in contrast to the four types found in *BhG* 7.16), it is in accordance with their doctrinal consideration, as the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism accepts *bhakti* as the fifth end of human life (*pañcama-puruṣārtha*), in addition to the generally accepted four types of *puruṣārtha*-s, i.e. *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. But we can justify Baladeva while we see that the fourth type of devotees (i.e. *jñānin* in *BhG* 7.16) is nothing but a devotee with dispassion (*niṣkāma-bhakta*) according to MS. Further, in his comments on *BhG* 18.64, Baladeva talks about *sādhya* and *sādhana* types of *bhakti* for the *niṣkāma* devotees, which also finds resemblance with the view of MS, as we have said earlier.⁷⁹³

Dhanapati Sūri (1750-1850 CE, a proponent of the Advaita school of Śaṅkara): As we have referred to in chapter one and discussed in several places in chapters three, four, and five, Dhanapati, who often refers to commentators like Śaṅkara,⁷⁹⁴ Ānandagiri,⁷⁹⁵ the other sub-commentators of Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya*,⁷⁹⁶ Śrīdhara,⁷⁹⁷ Nīlakaṇṭha⁷⁹⁸ etc., refers to MS as many as one hundred and sixty times

⁷⁹³ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not found): *Gītābhūṣaṇa*, pp. 160-2, 226-7, 255, and 329; and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, introductory verse 7, p. 3 -- *Gītābhūṣaṇa*, pp. 207-8 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 362-3 -- *Gītābhūṣaṇa*, pp. 100, 220, 265, 340-1, and 474; and *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 362-3.

⁷⁹⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā* on *BhG* 2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 2.15, 2.17, 2.18, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.24, 2.27, 2.28, 2.29, 2.41, 3.3, 3.5, 3.41, 4.4, 4.6, 4.13, 4.17, 4.20, 4.24, 5.7, 5.10, 5.14, 5.21, 6.29, 6.38, 6.40, 8.6, 9.16, 9.21, 11.43, 13.23, 16.17, 18.6, and concluding verse 1.

⁷⁹⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā* on *BhG* 1.2 and 2.15.

⁷⁹⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā* on *BhG* 1.2, 1.7, 1.10, 1.18, 1.21, 1.35, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.14.

⁷⁹⁷ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā* on *BhG* 1.10, 2.5, 2.25, 2.41, 2.44, 2.48, 2.49, 2.72, 3.3, 3.9, 3.15, 3.21, 3.29, 4.8, 4.10, 4.14, 4.16, 4.18, 4.20, 4.24, 4.30, 5.3, 5.4, 5.9, 5.11, 5.24, 6.1, 6.3, 6.6, 6.7, 7.4, 8.15, 8.28, 9.18, 9.21, 9.32, 10.6, 10.12, 10.21, 10.32, 11.32, 11.40, 12.3, 13.3, 13.4, 13.8, 13.12, 13.17, 13.18, 13.21, 13.24, 13.30, 14.3, 14.27, 15.7, 15.16, 17.10, 18.10, 18.13, 18.19, 18.36, and 18.68

⁷⁹⁸ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā* on *BhG* 1.1, 2.2, 2.7, 2.10, 2.14, 2.20, 2.28, 2.29, 2.41, 2.47, 2.66, 2.70, 2.72, 3.3, 3.20, 3.28, 3.29, 3.32, 4.1, 4.6, 4.8, 4.10, 4.13, 4.14, 4.16, 4.18, 4.21, 4.22, 4.25, 4.26, 4.30, 4.31, 4.35, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7, 5.13, 5.15, 6.2, 6.3, 6.6, 6.7, 7.4, 7.25, 7.26, 7.29, 8.15, 9.1, 9.2, 9.6, 9.15, 9.16, 9.21, 10.6, 10.21, 10.33, 11.32, 11.35, 11.40, 12.1, 12.13, 12.16, 12.17, 13.8, 13.12, 13.17, 13.18, 13.21, 13.24, 13.28, 14.2, 14.27, 15.6, 16.8, 16.24, 17.6, 17.10, 18.6, 18.10, 18.17, and 18.23, 18.34, 18.36, 18.55, and 18.68.

in his commentary on the *BhG*, which is called the *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*.⁷⁹⁹ Besides aiming at showing the appropriateness of Śaṅkara's commentary on the *BhG*, Dhanapati refers to these other commentaries in order to show their inferiority, as they often fail to follow the lead of Śaṅkara's *Gītābhāṣya*.

However, there are several occasions when Dhanapati refers to these commentators also in support of his own view. But we need to review at least some of the objections that Dhanapati, despite being a follower of Śaṅkara Vedānta, has raised in a great number against MS's *GD*. As we have pointed out earlier, Dhanapati has criticised MS without naming him in a number of places, where the latter seems to deviate from or fail to grasp what the great commentator Śaṅkara wanted to convey. And in a recently published vernacular translation of MS's *GD*, we find that the writer of the preface of that book has pointed out as many as twenty five verses, where Dhanapati objects to MS's interpretation.⁸⁰⁰ Due to paucity of space, we note here only some of such objections.

(i) *BhG* 1.24 contains a statement of Sañjaya who tells Dhṛtarāṣṭra that after being requested by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa placed the chariot of Arjuna between the two large armies about to engage in the Kurukṣetra war. According to MS, Dhṛtarāṣṭra hoped that after being requested by Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa would adopt the principle of non-violence, and would dissuade Arjuna from participating in the war. In order to remove this wrong assumption, Sañjaya uttered this verse. Dhanapati Sūri rejects this view on the ground that Dhṛtarāṣṭra already knew that the war was

⁷⁹⁹ For references, see footnote 188 supra.

⁸⁰⁰ *Sanātanadeva* 2005: *Bhūmikā*, pp. 10-3 (*BhG* 2.7, 2.11, 2.13, 2.15, 2.16, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.24, 2.39, 2.54, 2.67, 2.70, 3.3, 3.18, 3.28, 5.7, 6.19, 6.30, 7.21, 7.29, 8.20, 9.15, etc.).

about to begin, and hence, there was no reason for entertaining such a baseless hope.

(ii) *BhG* 1.45 starts with the words ‘*yadi mām-apratīkāram*’ etc., and according to MS, Arjuna says this to Kṛṣṇa, anticipating the objection that even if Arjuna desists from war, other members of his family like Bhīma etc. would certainly take part in the war that would result in the death of his relatives. Arjuna says here that he would follow the principle of non-violence even if it results in his death. Dhanapati Sūri rejects this view on the ground that no answer of Śrīkṛṣṇa that is relevant to such an anticipated question is found in the *BhG*.

(iii) In course of explaining *BhG* 2.7, MS holds that, the word *śreyaḥ* that occurs in the second hemistich of this verse stands for the highest end of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*), i.e. liberation (*mokṣa*). Dhanapati Sūri has pointed out that, in the first hemistich of this verse, Arjuna has described himself as extremely confused about his duty (*dharma-saṁmūḍha-cetāḥ*). Such a person is likely to enquire about *dharma*, and not about *mokṣa*. Accordingly, Dhanapati Sūri maintains that, here, the word *śreyaḥ* stands for what is beneficial (*hitāvaha*), and not *mokṣa*.

(iv) In view of the phrase ‘*nāyaṁ hanti na hanyate*’ that occurs in the second hemistich of *BhG* 2.19, MS introduces the next verse (i.e. *BhG* 2.20, which starts with the words ‘*na jāyate mriyate vā kadācit*’ etc.) with the remark that this verse explains why the self can be neither the agent (*kartā*) nor the object (*karma*) of the act of killing (*hanana-kriyā*). But strangely enough, while introducing *BhG* 2.21, MS says that, the self cannot be the agent of the act of killing, where in *BhG*

2.21, it has been shown why it cannot be the object of the act of killing. Dhanapati Sūri has pointed out this obvious case of inconsistency.

(v) While explaining the first hemistich of *BhG* 2.22 (i.e. ‘*vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni grhṇāti naro’parāni*’), MS maintains that, the word *jīrṇa* and *nava* occurring in this verse, which normally mean something old and something new respectively, should be understood here in the senses of inferior (*nikṛṣṭa*) and superior (*utkrṣṭa*) respectively. Therefore, MS says that, since the Kurukṣetra war would help people like Bhīṣma in obtaining better bodies in heaven after leaving their present and inferior bodies that have become old, it should be considered something desirable and helpful (*upakāraka*). Dhanapati Sūri points out that such an interpretation is incongruous with the context, and also involves ellipsis of the qualificand (*viśesyādhyāhāra*). Moreover, even young people, whose bodies have not become old, are killed in a war. Hence, the interpretation offered by MS is not tenable.

(vi) While explaining the second hemistich of *BhG* 2.24 (i.e. ‘*nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthāṇuracalo’yaṃ sanātanaḥ*’), MS quoted the Śruti passages like ‘*ākāśavat sarvagataśca nityaḥ*’ (*CU* 3.14.3), ‘*vṛkṣa iva stabdho divi tiṣṭhatyekah*’ (*ŚU* 3.9) etc. for establishing that the self is eternal. Dhanapati Sūri points out that, MS himself has said in the introduction to the *GD* that the first six chapters explicate the nature of the individual self that is expressed by the word *tvam*, whereas the scriptural passages quoted by him describe the nature of *brahman* that is expressed by the word *tat*. That the present verse discusses the nature of the individual self that is embodied is evident from the earlier verses that contain

expressions like ‘*gatāsūn agatāsūṃśca*’, ‘*dehino’smin*’, ‘*antavanta ime dehāḥ*’, ‘*vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni*’ etc. Hence, the interpretation of MS is not tenable.⁸⁰¹

The works of modern scholars also lead one to consider afresh to what extent MS’s *GD* can be considered a reliable commentary on the *BhG*, or a reliable commentary that properly evaluates Śaṅkara’s commentary on the *BhG*. However, it may be pointed out that, in addition to some of the above-mentioned commentaries on the *BhG*, MS has also made use of various relevant sources of Sanskrit literature (both philosophical and non-philosophical). As pointed out earlier, MS had before him, along with the rich legacy of his own Advaitic tradition, various philosophical doctrines that he had to refer to frequently, either for supporting his own position or for showing their invalidity. Some of the important philosophical schools that MS refers to in his *GD* on the *BhG* are the Mīmāṃsā (on *BhG* 1.38, 18.7, 18.12, 18.18 etc.), Sāṃkhya (on *BhG* 2.7, 7.4, 18.7 etc.), Cārvāka (on *BhG* 2.13, 13.6, 16.8, 16.11, 18.14, 18.22 etc.), Nyāya (on *BhG* 2.13 ff., 13.6 etc.), Vaiśeṣika (on *BhG* 2.14 etc.), Yoga (on *BhG* 2, 4, 5, 6 etc.), Jñāna-karma-samuccaya-vādin (on *BhG* 3.2, 4.18 etc.), Bauddha (on *BhG* 13.6, 16.24, 17.5 etc.), Jaina (on *BhG* 17.5, 18.22 etc.), Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Rāmānuja (on *BhG* 4.6 etc.), the Mādhva Vedānta (on *BhG* 18.21 etc.) etc.

As a vernacular translator has already listed in appendices of his work the sources made use of by MS in his *GD*,⁸⁰² we refrain from repeating the same work.

⁸⁰¹ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā*, pp. 20, 29-30, 37, 69-70, 76-7, 78-9.

⁸⁰² Agrawal 2005: Vol. 2, *Anubandha* 2, pp. 915-52.

In the concluding chapter which follows, we propose to make some evaluative statements about the text (i.e. the *GD*), its author (i.e. MS) and its place as a commentary on the *BhG* together with our key findings in the dissertation.

Conclusion

Devotion to a personal God, i.e. *bhakti*, has been a longstanding problem in Indian religious and philosophical thinking. Rudolf Otto's *Mysticism: East and West* elucidates Śaṅkara's attitude towards *bhakti* as follows:

Śaṅkara himself, in the lower level, is a thorough-going theist and that with ardor and holy zeal. His theology is here almost identical with that of later Rāmānuja (outlined above) and his opposition to those who deny God and to their rival systems which oppose theism, is as great as that of his successor (Rāmānuja). Therefore, he takes it for granted that the man who is redeemed of God does not turn back, but on the path of gradual redemption finds its last in *Brahma-nirvāṇa* (*sic.*).

However hyperbolic it may sound, Otto's observation about Śaṅkara's outlook on devotion would be applicable more directly to MS in general, and his *GD* in particular -- a point that is of central importance in our dissertation.

Keeping in mind the intellectual, institutional and literary contexts that we have tried to unearth in this dissertation, and the research questions that are stated in chapter 1.1; we put forward the following observations in bullet point and explain them subsequently:

- The *GD* is a work belonging to the *adhikaraṇa-prasthāna*, and is an ideal example of proper exposition (*vyākhyā*). Moreover, MS, as compared with the earlier Advaitic commentators as well as with the general attitude of the Advaitic tradition, shows great distinctiveness in the *GD* in terms of interpretation and exposition of the *BhG*.

- MS never compromises Śaṃkara's non-dual doctrinal standpoint, and he is faithful to the latter's intent while differing in some level of detail.
- While the works of MS like the *AdS*, *AdRR* etc. were not criticised by the later adherents to the Advaita Vedānta school, his *GD* was sometimes criticised by the later commentators who subscribed to the Advaita Vedānta. That the *GD* was criticised by the later non-Advaitic commentators is hardly surprising.
- MS, as a great scholar of his time, held an independent approach while making use of source material in framing his own philosophical viewpoint. As a champion of both theism and non-dualism, MS was deeply influenced by contemporary philosophical and religious debates. An expert in the Navya-nyāya technique of logical argumentation, MS occupies a prime position in the history of the development of Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta philosophy.
- Modern scholarship⁸⁰³ presumes that devotion to *saguṇa-brahman* [in this context, devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*)] is irreconcilable with an Advaitic viewpoint, but MS made it his central objective to reconcile the two.

Instead of putting emphasis on polemics (*vāda*), the *GD* aims at (i) stating the subject-matter (*viśaya*) in an explicit manner; (ii) anticipating the doubts (*saṃśaya*-s) that may be raised by any opponent; (iii) discussing the *prima facie* views, or the views to be refuted in the *GD* (*pūrvapakṣa*-s); (iv) establishing the views to be finally admitted (*uttarapakṣa*); (v) showing the purpose (*prayojana*) served by a

⁸⁰³ Sanjukta Gupta, Lance E. Nelson etc. may be named as representatives of modern scholarship.

particular topic, and (vi) pointing out the relevance (*saṅgati*) of the topic to the main theme of discussion. By so doing, the text meets all the criteria for being regarded as a topical text (*adhikaraṇa-grantha*) and is, moreover, a perfect example of exposition (*vyākhyā*).

The features contributing to the distinctiveness of the *GD* as a commentary on the *BhG* may be summed up as: (i) dividing the *BhG* into three parts that deal with *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna* respectively, and linking up these three sections with the constituent words of the Upaniṣadic sentence ‘That thou art’ (*tattvamasi*), which is regarded as a great sentence (*mahāvākya*); (ii) hinting at the suggestive meaning (*vyāṅgyārtha*) of words, including even names or forms of address and the denotative meaning (*śakyārtha*) and implied meaning (*lakṣyārtha*) of words, which is quite consistent with the fact that the *BhG*, while being a text of great religious importance, is also a part of the *MBh* (i.e. the great epic of India), and thus also has a lot of poetic appeal (see chapter 1.7).

We have seen in this study that, while MS sometimes expresses deep doctrinal differences with commentators of other traditions, he remains faithful to Śaṅkara’s comments, especially when it comes to dealing with philosophical principles (see chapters 6.2-6.4). There are as many as twenty seven places where MS explicitly refers to Śaṅkara’s comments in support of his own position.

Even so, there are a few passages in which MS shows apparent disagreement with Śaṅkara in respect of the interpretation of the *BhG* text. For example, while dealing with the three means of attaining liberation (viz. *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*), MS, unlike Śaṅkara, has dealt extensively with Pātañjala Yoga (see chapters 3.1.5, 5.2.1). He draws on the *YV*, *YS*, *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa and the *Gauḍapāḍakārikā* in

order to show that Yoga is an aid to the other three means (viz. *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna-yoga*-s and that it is an important requirement to be fulfilled for practising *jñāna-yoga/dhyāna-yoga/samādhi-yoga*), though the ultimate means is considered to be *jñāna*. Despite holding that followers of Śaṅkara Vedānta do not find Pātañjala Yoga indispensable for obtaining self-realisation, he views *yoga* as a means of controlling the mind before self-realisation and of removing past *vāsanā*-s after the advent of *tattva-jñāna*, thereby indicating the important place of *yogic* practices for one who aspires for liberation.

We have also pointed out the views of commentators such as Nīlakaṇṭha and Dhanapati, as also those of modern scholars, who have either appreciated or criticized this position of MS. We have also shown, in support of MS's stance, that there are ample occasions where Śaṅkara, too, both in his comments on the Upaniṣads and on the *BS*, has admitted the *yogic* path as conducive to liberation, albeit in a somewhat different tone. This demonstrates that the fact that MS has described the *yogic* path in the course of mentioning the means of attaining liberation is not completely antagonistic to the views of Śaṅkara, but differs only in terms of emphasis. In this connection, the view of Fort (see chapter 2.4.3) that the *GD* of MS was influenced by the Yogic Advaita deserves careful consideration.

While Śaṅkara puts emphasis on two *mārga*-s (i.e. *karma* and *jñāna*) stated in the *BhG*, MS talks about three *mārga*-s (*karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*) as explicitly mentioned in the *BhG* as the means of attaining liberation. Most importantly, he regards the path of *bhakti* as both the means and the end of the paths of *karma* and *jñāna* (the *GD* on *BhG* 18.66). Though this declaration may appear to mark him as a dualist, his final view is in agreement with Śaṅkara. That is to say that knowledge

finally leads to the attainment of liberation. His declaration that it is the devotion to the Lord that produces knowledge, which culminates in liberation (the *GD* on *BhG* 18.73 etc.) marks him as a pure non-dualist, to whom the path of devotion is as good as that of knowledge (see chapters 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.3, 5.3). The Advaita Vedāntins maintain, in consonance with the Upaniṣadic dictum ‘Only when a man knows him does he pass beyond death; there is no other path for getting there’ (*ŚU* 6.15), that liberation is attained *only* through the knowledge of *brahman*, i.e. the ultimate reality, whereas the other Vedāntins, who do not subscribe to pure non-dualism, put more emphasis on devotion (*bhakti*), a means that has received much importance in the *BhG*. MS, however, while admitting the importance of devotion, maintains that devotion easily leads to the knowledge of reality, thus paving the path of liberation. This shows how he can admit the importance of devotion without compromising his belief in pure non-dualism.

The versified introduction to the *GD*, in conformity with the principles of Advaita Vedānta, delineates all the fourfold requisites (*anubandha-catuṣṭaya*) that are considered to be essential by any important text (of the Advaitic tradition). The basic philosophical stand of MS is reflected in these forty six introductory verses. MS fully supported the views of Śaṅkara regarding *jagat*, *jīvātman*, and *paramātman*, and also the view that the path of knowledge directly leads to liberation, thereby showing his unswerving affiliation to the fundamental doctrines of Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta (see chapters 3, 4, 5.2 etc.).

As has been noted, the interpretations of the *BhG* by MS came under severe criticism by even some members of his own school (see chapter 6.5 and the discussion on the preceding chapters). While this is seen as being due to the

emphasis he has put on *bhakti*, it must be remembered that internal commentarial differences within the Advaita tradition are quite normal, going back to the divergence in views between the *Bhāmatī* and the *Vivaraṇa* schools. As stated before, the critics of MS, who also belong to the same Advaita tradition, often claimed that Śaṅkara's commentary on the *BhG* is more authentic, thereby expressing the opinion that as a commentary, the *GD* is not always reliable. It should be noted that other works of MS, such as the *AdS* and *AdRR*, were not criticised by the later Advaitins in this manner.

Contemporary scholars such as Sanjukta Gupta point out⁸⁰⁴ that MS belonged to the post-Caitanya period, when religious mysticism permeated Bengal, and brought a simplification in the process of the origin of cognition that ultimately leads to the attainment of liberation. In the process of cognition, three components, namely cognition (*jñāna*), cognizer (*jñātā*), and the cognized (*jñeya*), respectively represent 'that', 'are', and 'thou' in the statement 'That thou art,' ending in the realization that they are one. Similarly, in the awareness of devotion, the mind is melted by the abiding passion of love for the qualified *brahman* (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa), the object of devotion. Gupta holds that MS thus implicitly accepts the qualified *brahman* (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa), also admitted by Rāmānuja as the ultimate reality and therefore MS erred in the eyes of the later Advaita thinkers. However, this may not be the *only* reason for Nīlakaṇṭha, Veṅkaṭanātha, Dhanapati etc. criticizing MS, because they take issue with him even in cases where the issue of devotion is not at all involved. A more plausible explanation may be that, in his quest for providing novel interpretations, MS may have at times come up with

⁸⁰⁴ Private correspondence, Sanjukta Gupta, 04.07.2013.

interpretations that appear somewhat far-fetched, and this was not acceptable to the later Advaitins.

Besides those belonging to the same tradition as MS, some of the later commentators of the *BhG* belonging to other traditions, such as Vallabhācārya, Puruṣottamajī, etc. of the Śuddhādvaita Vedānta school, found faults with MS's exposition on the *BhG* (see chapters 5.2.2.1, 6.5). While Vallabhācārya in his comments on *BhG* 7.16 expressed disagreement with MS following his own philosophical consideration (i.e. the Puṣṭimārga) that admits the grace of the Lord (*puṣṭi*) to be the sole factor for attaining liberation, Puruṣottamajī, in the introduction to his *BhG* commentary, rejected, without giving reasons, MS's attempt at making a tripartite division of the *BhG* corresponding to the tripartite division of the Vedas and his attempt to explain this division in terms of the three words of the Upaniṣadic great sentence '*tattvamasi*' (see chapters 3.1.4, 6.5).

MS was a champion of both theism and monism. As a monk belonging to the order of the Śaṅkara tradition, the authorities followed by MS are invariably the texts of his tradition. In order to defend a prominent place for *bhakti* in the Advaitic tradition, he had also to resort to sources such as the *BP*, which explicitly emphasise devotion, though such texts were not typically cited by the Advaitins to establish a doctrine. It is evident from a close scrutiny of his works that, though MS was willing to accommodate the views of various post-Śaṅkara schools of Advaita Vedānta, it is the *Vivaraṇa* school to which MS's allegiance is evident. This view is substantiated by the fact that, out of the five definitions of falsity given by MS, three are based on the *Vivaraṇa* school, and that he accepts the principal doctrines of this school, such as that *brahman* is both the substratum and object of nescience,

verbal testimony leads to the immediate knowledge of *brahman*, reflection theory explains the relation between *brahman* and *jīva* etc. (see chapters 1.3-1.4).

As regards the influence of contemporary philosophical trends upon MS's views, our conclusions are follows. MS was clearly influenced by Śrīdhara Svāmin (14th century CE, a celebrated commentator of the *BP* and the *BhG*, and an advocate of the Non-dualism of Śaṃkara) while writing the *GD*, as the latter is considered to be a proponent of *nirguṇa-bhakti-mārga*. However, he has not failed to differ from Śrīdhara (the *GD* on *BhG* 2.41, 13.12, 15.16)⁸⁰⁵ when the latter's views appeared to be unconvincing [see chapter 6.4]. Besides the *GD*, MS's *HLV* bears frequent references to Śrīdhara, and both the authors talk about *nirguṇa-bhakti*. Although Śrīdhara talks about the utility of devotion to the Lord as a means of liberation, he also distinguishes this from that of knowledge. In the concluding part of his commentary on the *BhG*, Śrīdhara, with the support of various Śruti and Smṛti texts, asserts that devotion to the Lord alone is the means of liberation, and that the knowledge of the self is an intermediate operation (*avāntara-vyāpāra*) of devotion to the Lord. That is, for him devotion to the Lord causes knowledge of the self that ultimately leads to liberation.⁸⁰⁶ This view is compatible with the spirit of Śaṃkara's Advaita doctrine, and, of course, with that of MS.

In formulating his definition of *bhakti*, MS certainly followed the *BP*, but he might also have been influenced by Vopadeva, the author of the *Muktāphala* and its

⁸⁰⁵ MS frequently refers to Śrīdhara's commentary on the *BP* as well in his *Harilīlāviveka* (i.e. commentary on the *Harilīlāmṛtam* by Vopadeva) [See *Harilīlāmṛta* 1933: *Harilīlāmṛta*, *Daśamaskandhakathāsāraḥ*, p. 32 etc.).

⁸⁰⁶ See *Bhagavadgīta* 1999: *Śrīdharaīvyākhyā*, pp. 773-5.

commentator Hemādri, as he quotes the author of the *Muktāphala* in his *IPP*⁸⁰⁷ (see chapter 5.2.2.2).

Neither MS nor any of the early exponents of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism belonging to the same period as MS refer to each other in their works. It is therefore difficult to prove for certain, based on the literary evidence, that MS was influenced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. However, as we have seen above, Sanjukta Gupta points out that it is possible that the environment of religious mysticism that permeated India in the post-Caitanya period has influenced MS. The reference to the *GD* of MS by Viśvanātha Cakravartin and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa (i.e. the two famous adherents to the Bengal Vaiṣṇavism of the 18th century CE), in support of their views in their respective commentaries on the *BhG*, indicates that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas found certain explanations given by MS, a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as worthy of consideration, in spite of their basic doctrinal differences. In these cases, MS has described Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa as the *brahman* Himself, which is very close to the doctrine of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism (see chapters 4.1.3, 6.5, appendix II etc.). All this, however, proves MS's influence on later Caitanya thought, rather than the other way round.

Evidence of MS's strong mastery of both the old and new Nyāya schools is found in the frequent quotations from the *Nyāyakusumāñjali*⁸⁰⁸ of Udayana (a logician from Mithilā around 1050/1054 CE) and the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*⁸⁰⁹ of Gaṅgeśa (13th century CE) in the *AdS* and *AdRR*. His independent frame of mind is demonstrated by the fact that he often rejects the positions of these famous

⁸⁰⁷ *Īśvarapratipattiprakāśa* 1921: p. 7.

⁸⁰⁸ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 16, 405, 639 and *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: pp. 9, 26 (and Gupta 1966: Introduction, pp. xvi-xvii).

⁸⁰⁹ *Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 18 (and Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. xvii).

predecessors in order to establish his own views, and utilises the methods of the new school of logic to defend Advaita views. In the *AdS*, by exhibiting an independent outlook, he even sheds new light in interpreting the *BS* and *BhG* texts.⁸¹⁰

Regarding the exegesis of Advaita doctrine, MS was very much influenced by Maṇḍana Miśra, Sureśvarācārya,⁸¹¹ Prakāśātmayati,⁸¹² Vācaspati Miśra⁸¹³ and Sarvajñātmamuni.⁸¹⁴ While dealing with the dialectical tasks in the *AdS* and *AdRR*, which defended Advaita doctrine against the criticisms of the dualists, MS was also influenced by Śrīharṣa (12th century CE), Ānandabodha (12th century CE) and Citsukha (13th century CE).⁸¹⁵

While harmonizing and making use of the views of his predecessors, MS adopts an independent stance in refuting the views of dualists such as the Naiyāyikas and Mādhva Vaiṣṇavites, who had put forward *new* arguments for rejecting the doctrine of Advaita Vedānta. In order to determine the role that MS plays in the history of the development of Advaita Vedānta philosophy, we have looked not only at his approach to devotion, but also his views on *avidyā*, on the basis of which, MS could respond to both the dualist Vaiṣṇavas and realist Naiyāyikas posing a grave threat to the foundation of Advaita Vedānta (see chapters

⁸¹⁰ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 17-8 (and Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. xvi), pp. 435 and 846 (and Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. xvii).

⁸¹¹ In the *AdS* (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 467), the view of Sureśvara is elaborated (cf. Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. xvii). Sureśvara is also frequently quoted by him (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, p. 676).

⁸¹² In the *AdS* (*Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 486-7), MS has made use of *Vivaraṇa-kāra*'s doctrines (cf. Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. xvii). In his *AdRR* too, MS takes support from *Vivaraṇa-kāra* (*Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa* 1917: p. 27).

⁸¹³ *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 47, *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 585 (and Gupta 2006: p. 26).

⁸¹⁴ *Bhagavadgītā* 1999: *Madhusūdanīvyākhyā*, pp. 356, 676; *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 577, *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 46 (and Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. xvii, Agrawal 2005: Pt. 1, *bhūmikā*, p. 24).

⁸¹⁵ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: pp. 364, 464; 316; 322 (and Gupta 1966: Introduction, p. xviii).

1.2, 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.3, 5.3 etc.). To many Indian philosophers, Śaṅkara's treatment of illusoriness or falsity, that is the hallmark of *avidyā*, appeared to be problematic. For the Advaitins, *avidyā/māyā/ajñāna* is without a beginning and is opposed to cognition of its object (i.e. it is destructible by cognition of its object), though positive in nature in the sense that it is not merely the absence of cognition (*jñānābhāva*) [*anādi- bhavarūpatve sati jñānanivartyā*],⁸¹⁶ while the world, also the product of *avidyā*, tends to be illusory. This is the foremost objection raised by the opponents against the followers of the Advaita Vedānta school. Although an elaborate discussion of this issue is not possible here, it should be noted that even though Advaita philosophers like Maṇḍana Miśra and Sureśvarācārya, who were contemporaries of Śaṅkara,⁸¹⁷ tried to defend the concepts of *mithyātva* and *avidyā* by refuting their opponents' views, with the advent of Udayanācārya, the eminent Naiyāyika, a fresh attack against the Advaita Vedāntins was launched by applying logical arguments against the notions of *avidyā* and *mithyātva*. While the later Advaita writers like Śrīharṣa, Ānandabodha and Citsukha answered the objections of the Naiyāyikas by adopting the tools of logical argumentation developed by the Naiyāyikas themselves, the tenets of Advaita Vedānta could not be established beyond dispute (see chapters 1.2, 1.4 etc.).

With the advent of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya, who revived the method of applying syllogistic reasoning and also the method of finding faults in defective reasoning with the help of technical terms for framing exact formulations of definition, a new era began in the history of the development of Nyāya philosophy, which is known as the era of neo-logic (Navya-nyāya). The Mādhva Vedāntins,

⁸¹⁶ *Advaitasiddhi* 2005: p. 544.

⁸¹⁷ See chapter 1.3 for the discussion of their chronology.

who were staunch supporters of dualism, and were thus arch-enemies of the Advaita Vedāntins, adopted the techniques of Navya-nyāya effectively, while not accepting all of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya's doctrines. Their arguments against Advaita doctrines became more technical with the adoption of such techniques, and works like the *Nyāyasudhā* of Jaya Tīrtha and the *Nyāyāmṛta* of Vyāsa Tīrtha became the biggest challenges for the Advaita Vedāntins.

To MS goes the credit for answering the subtle objections and arguments found in such works, by exhibiting equal or greater skill in dialectics in his *AdS*. Followers of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya, such as Śaṅkara Miśra, had independently criticized the Advaita Vedānta in works like the *Bhedaratna* and MS responded to these in his *AdRR*. One of MS's greatest achievements is that he was able to defend the Advaita Vedānta against the onslaught of such formidable opponents by utilising the techniques of refutations employed by those very opponents against the Advaitins.⁸¹⁸

The brief description that we have given of each of MS's available works and their references throughout the dissertation (see chapters 1.2, 5.2.2.1-5.2.2.3, 5.3 etc.) prove that all of his works highlight his leaning towards devotion, be it the *AdS* or *AdRR* or the *SB*, dealing with the fundamental tenets of Advaita Vedānta, or the *BhR* or *MST* or *BPPŚV* or the *HLV* that primarily expound the nature of devotion. The same is the case with the *GD*. Thus, MS does not show any major shift in thinking in any of his works, excepting in one of his early works on devotion, called the *BhR*, where he regards *bhakti* as the supreme end of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*).

⁸¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of it, see Gupta 2006: pp. 2-3 and Bhattacharya 1986: Preface and the following chapters therein.

His definition of *bhakti* does not stem from the Pāñcarātra school either. In his *IPP*, MS refers to the names of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva in the sense of *virāṭa*, *hiraṇyagarbha*, *īśvara* and *sākṣin* (*sarva-sākṣī-paramānanda-ghana*) respectively. No Bhāgavata school refers to them using these appellations, while the Pāñcarātras name them *ahaṁkara*, *manas*, *jīva* and *īśvara* respectively. This indicates that MS, in spite of being a great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, was not a follower of the Pāñcarātra school, which was subjected to severe criticism by Śaṁkara himself in his *BSB*.⁸¹⁹ While the *BP* had influenced the philosophical outlook of MS on devotion,⁸²⁰ his definition of *bhakti* differs significantly from those given by the exponents of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, who also held the *BP* in high esteem.

To sum up, it can be said that for MS, Advaita Vedānta was the foundation on which he erected his philosophical and devotional edifice. While expressing his unconditional devotion to the Lord, he never adopted the manner in which other dualist Vedāntins view it, as is evident from his robust criticism of the followers of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Rāmānuja (*GD* on *BhG* 4.6 etc.) and those of Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva (*GD* on *BhG* 18.21 etc.),⁸²¹ and also the criticism of other Indian philosophical schools whenever their positions were found to be incompatible with his own non-dualistic position. His treatment of *bhakti* is not similar to the treatment of *bhakti* by other dualist schools, though, as we have mentioned (see chapters 5.2.2.2-5.2.2.3), Rāmānuja's treatment of *bhakti* in terms of *bhakti-yoga* or *upāsanā* may have had some influence on MS's own scheme. While the *BP* exerted

⁸¹⁹ *Brahmasūtra* 2000: *BSB* on *BS* 2.2.42-2.2.45, pp. 532-5.

⁸²⁰ *Īśvarapratipatti prakāśa* 1921: pp. 6-7 and *Harilīlāmṛta* 1933: p. *Paramahaṁsapriyā*, p. 69 (Also refer to Modi 1985: pp. 20-1).

⁸²¹ As we have noted earlier, in his *SB* too, MS criticizes Mādhva Vaiṣṇavas (See *Siddhāntabindu* 1986: p. 145).

immense influence on the theological speculations of MS, he developed his Vaiṣṇava theology in consonance with his adherence to Śaṃkara's non-dualistic philosophy, thereby adopting some of the Vaiṣṇava views that were contemporary with MS, i.e. the views of Caitanya prevalent in Bengal, where Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is regarded as the supreme reality.

MS's treatment of *bhakti* as the modification of the mind in which the Lord is reflected, and which accordingly assumes his form (*bhagavadākāra*), is merely theoretical. As both Śaṃkara and MS often characterise *bhakti* as knowledge (*jñāna*) or bliss (*ānanda*) in their respective commentaries on the *BhG*, they view it as the very nature of *brahman*. Our discussion in the chapters dealing with the philosophical doctrines of the *BhG*, as explained in the *GD*, has substantiated, with the help of the arguments and citations from relevant textual sources, that there is enough room for *bhakti* in the tenets of Advaita.

According to some scholars, the socio-cultural environment of the time of MS was suitable for devotional worship of *saguṇa-brahman*, and this view deserves serious consideration.⁸²² While the situation during the time of Śaṃkara and his immediate followers, such as Padmapāda, Sureśvara etc., was perhaps conducive to intellectually dealing with *nirguṇa brahman*, Śaṃkara never denied the utility of devotion for ultimately attaining the realisation of *nirguṇa brahman*. Moreover, the criticism against Advaita that it cannot consistently talk about *bhakti* can be shown to be misplaced, if one remembers that for the Advaita Vedānta school, all these concepts of *yoga*, *jñāna*, *mokṣa* and *bhakti*, involving the notion of duality and differentiation, are to be viewed as fully operative in the realm of *vyāvahārika*. In

⁸²² Gupta 2006: pp. 4-5.

the *pāramārthika* realm, there does not exist any duality or differentiation, but this does not amount to a denial of the roles of *bhakti*, *upāsanā* and *dhyāna* in the path to liberation.

Thus, the views of modern scholars such as Gupta, Nelson and Marcaurelle, who have questioned the plausibility of the attempt by MS for bringing devotion and *yoga* within the parameters of Advaita Vedānta, needs to be reconsidered, and we have made a humble attempt at doing the same in this dissertation (see chapters 2.4.3, 5.2.1, 5.2.2.2-5.2.2.3). The possibility that MS was successful to a large extent in such an attempt has been examined afresh here. The general perception that, though MS could not accord to *bhakti* the importance that a dualist could do, his attempt in this regard outshines the attempt by any other Advaitin, as is also evident from his influence on the works of his own disciples and commentators like Brahmānanda Sarasvatī and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha. Despite being an ardent follower of the Advaita Vedānta, the clear cut assertions of these two commentators that *śuddha/prema/nirguṇa-bhakti* is similar to *jñānamiśra-bhakti*, and that there is no inconsistency in accepting *bhakti* as the *paramapuruṣārtha* (as stated by Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha) and that *nirguṇa-bhakti* is the best means of attaining Lord Viṣṇu (as held Brahmānanda Sarasvatī), show their agreement with MS on such issues (see chapter 5.2.2.2). As a modern scholar points out, ‘The school of Madhusūdana can better be called that of a monistic theism.’⁸²³ Herein lies the justification for Rudolf Otto’s observation quoted above.

Finally, we conclude this thesis with the statement that an inclination to the Advaita Vedānta school is compatible with devotion, though it may not be of the

⁸²³ Nair 1990: p. 223.

same flavour as that of the dualist schools. The attitude of MS in this regard is best supported by an ancient text, the *Avadhūtagītā*, which states that even in order to have some leaning towards non-dualism, one needs the grace of God (*īśvarānugrahādeva puṁsāmadvaitavāsanā*)⁸²⁴ -- a fact that finds sufficient support in the *BP* as well, where in its various places (e.g. *BP* 1.7.10, 3.29.13 etc.)⁸²⁵ it is said that devotion is spontaneous even after obtaining liberation and at times, it appears to be superior to obtaining liberation to the devotees (i.e. a view that is echoed by MS in his *BhR* in no uncertain terms).

We do hope that this study, which we have put together with due diligence and care, will engender some modifications in the general view that the Advaita Vedānta is totally antagonistic to devotion to a personal God. MS's writings on *bhakti* and his acceptance of Lord Kṛṣṇa as nothing but the Advaitic *nirguṇa brahman* put a question mark not only on the position of MS as a staunch follower of Śaṅkara's non-dual philosophy, but also on the entire Advaitic tradition. It is our sincere hope that a careful study of this dissertation and the works of MS in particular (along with the source material for understanding the principal tenets of Advaita school) will make the discerning readers accept the fact that the path of devotion has been an important component of the Advaita system of philosophy, which was forcefully stated and established by MS -- a fact that reinforces his influence upon the religio-philosophical views and the intellectual discourse and debates prevalent in India.

⁸²⁴ *Avadhūtagītā* (2014): Verse no. 1.

⁸²⁵ *Bhāgavata* (2064 Vikrama Saṁvad): pp. 31, 137.

List of Abbreviations

Texts

<i>AdRR</i>	<i>Advaitaratnarakṣaṇa of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>AdS</i>	<i>Advaitasiddhi of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>ĀM</i>	<i>Ānandamandākinī of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>AU</i>	<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>BhG</i>	<i>Bhagavadgītā</i>
<i>BP</i>	<i>Bhāgavata Purāṇa</i>
<i>BPĀŚTV</i>	<i>Bhāgavtapurāṇādyaślokatrayavyākhyā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>BPPŚV</i>	<i>Bhāgavatapurāṇaprathamāślokovyākhyā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Brahmasūtra of Bādarāyaṇa</i>
<i>BU</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
<i>BṛVā</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya Vārtika of Sureśvara</i>
<i>BṛVāSB</i>	<i>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad Bhāṣya Vārtika, Sambandha Bhāṣya</i>
<i>CU</i>	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>GD</i>	<i>Gūḍhārthadīpikā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>GTL</i>	<i>Gūḍhārthatattvāloka of Baccā Jhā</i>
<i>HLV</i>	<i>Harilīlavyākhyā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>ĪPP</i>	<i>Īśvarapratipattiprakāśa of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>ĪU</i>	<i>Īśa Upaniṣad</i>
<i>JMV</i>	<i>Jīvanmuktiviveka of Vidyāraṇya</i>
<i>KeU</i>	<i>Kena Upaniṣad</i>
<i>KKN</i>	<i>Kṛṣṇakūtaḥalanāṭaka of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>KU</i>	<i>Kaṭha Upaniṣad</i>
<i>MāU</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad</i>

<i>MāUK</i>	<i>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā</i>
<i>MBh</i>	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
<i>MST</i>	<i>Mahimnastotraṭikā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>MU</i>	<i>Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad</i>
<i>NBhS</i>	<i>Nāradaḥaktisūtra</i>
<i>PB</i>	<i>Prasthānabheda of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>PD</i>	<i>Pañcadaśī of Vidyāraṇya</i>
<i>ŚBhS</i>	<i>Śāṇḍilyaḥaktisūtra</i>
<i>ŚU</i>	<i>Śvetaśvatara Upaniṣad</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Siddhāntabindu of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>SK</i>	<i>Sāṃkhyakārikā of Īśvaraḥṛṣṇa</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Saṃkṣepaśārīraka of Sarvajñaātman</i>
<i>SSSS</i>	<i>Saṃkṣepaśārīrakasārasaṃgraha of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>TU</i>	<i>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Tarkasaṃgraha with the Dīpikā of Annaṃbhaṭṭa</i>
<i>UŚ</i>	<i>Upadeśasāhasrī of Śaṃkara</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi of Śaṃkara</i>
<i>VKL</i>	<i>Vedāntakalpalatikā of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</i>
<i>VP</i>	<i>Vedāntaparibhāṣā of Dharmarāja</i>
<i>VPS</i>	<i>Vivaraṇaprameyasāṃgraha of Vidyāraṇya</i>
<i>VS</i>	<i>Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda</i>
<i>VSN</i>	<i>Viṣṇusahasranāma</i>
<i>VuP</i>	<i>Viṣṇu Purāṇa</i>
<i>YV</i>	<i>Yogavāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki</i>
<i>YS</i>	<i>Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali</i>

‘B’ added to the abbreviation of any text (as *BS* for *Brahmasūtra*) indicates the commentary of Śaṃkara on that text. Thus, *BSB* stands for the commentary of Śaṃkara on the *Brahmasūtra*.

Journals

<i>ABORI</i>	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</i>
<i>ALB</i>	<i>Adyar Library Bulletin (Brahmavidyā)</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>Aryan Path</i>
<i>AUS</i>	<i>Allahabad University Studies (Arts & Science)</i>
<i>BITC</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures (Madras)</i>
<i>BRMIC</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture</i>
<i>BV</i>	<i>Bhāratīya Vidyā</i>
<i>DP</i>	<i>Dilip</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBBRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JIP</i>	<i>Journal of Indian Philosophy</i>
<i>JIBS</i>	<i>Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies</i>
<i>JGJRI</i>	<i>Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute</i>
<i>JMSUB</i>	<i>Journal of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda</i>
<i>JMU</i>	<i>Journal of the Madras University</i>
<i>JOI</i>	<i>Journal of the Oriental Institute (Baroda)</i>
<i>JOR</i>	<i>Journal of Oriental Reserach (Madras)</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Great Britain and Ireland)</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Religios Studies (Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjab University)</i>
<i>JSAL</i>	<i>Journal of South Asian Literature</i>
<i>JUB</i>	<i>Journal of the University of Bombay</i>
<i>JVS</i>	<i>Journal of Vaishnava Studies</i>
<i>IA</i>	<i>Indian Antiquary</i>
<i>IC</i>	<i>Indian Culture</i>
<i>IHQ</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly</i>
<i>IJJ</i>	<i>Indo-Iranian Journal</i>
<i>IPA</i>	<i>Indian Philosophical Annual</i>
<i>NIA</i>	<i>New Indian Antiquary (IA series 1938 ff.)</i>

<i>PB</i>	<i>Prabuddha Bharata</i>
<i>PEW</i>	<i>Philosophy East and West</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Pathway to God</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Poona Orientalist</i>
<i>PTOC</i>	<i>Proceedings and Transactions of Oriental Conference</i>
<i>PTAIOC</i>	<i>Proceedings and Transactions of All India Oriental Conference</i>
<i>QJMS</i>	<i>Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society</i>
<i>RT</i>	<i>Religious Traditions</i> (MacGill University and University of Sydney)
<i>SAHC</i>	<i>South Asian History and Culture</i>
<i>VK</i>	<i>Vedanta Kesari</i>
<i>VŚ</i>	<i>Voice of Śaṅkara</i>
<i>WZKSO</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd-und Südostasiens</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

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Appendices

Appendix-I

A brief note on the historical background, formation, and teaching of the

Bhagavadgītā

The Vedānta philosophy is basically based on three canonical texts (*prasthāna-trayī*). ‘*prasthita*’ means to get established in the knowledge of reality, and that by which it is accomplished is called *prasthāna*. These three *prasthāna*-s are (i) the *Brahmasūtra*-s by Bādarāyaṇa, a secondary text based on the Vedas, which is called *nyāya-prasthāna* or *tarka-prasthāna*, as it conveys the teaching of Vedānta in an argumentative way, (ii) the Upaniṣads, which are called the *śruti-prasthāna*, since they are part of the Vedas, which are *śruti* (heard and revealed), and (iii) the *Bhagavadgītā*, which is regarded as the *smṛti-prasthāna* (the text which is remembered), because it is a part of the *Mahābhārata* (400 BCE - 400 CE), which is a remembered text (*smṛti*).

The full name of the *Gītā* is ‘*Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*’ or ‘*Bhagavadgītā*’. The etymological derivation of ‘*Bhagavadgītā*’ is ‘*bhagavat*’ (divine or venerated) + ‘*gītā*’ (a name given to certain sacred compositions, often in a dialogical manner in versified form for the exposition of a particular philosophical or theosophical doctrine; e.g. *Śivagītā*, *Rāmagītā* etc.).⁸²⁶ On the other hand, ‘*gītā*’ is a feminine form of ‘*gītam*’ (song-neutral)

⁸²⁶ Apte 1965: p. 405.

In the course of his discussion about the *Gītā* literature in relation to its goal ‘*brahmavidyā*’, Umesh Chandra Bhattacharjee finds several texts both in the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇic literature, which like the *Bhagavadgītā*, bear the general suffix ‘*gītā*’, have similarity in dialogical structure, and are select portions of sacred texts either propagating worship of sectarian deities or intending to impart ‘*brahmavidyā*’, make use of the Upaniṣads directly or indirectly, and are also modelled upon the text *Gītā* in terms of their literary composition. Bhattacharjee mentions of the following as consisting of the *Mahābhārata* such as the *Utathyagītā*, *Vāmadevagītā*, *Rṣabhagītā*, *Śampākagītā*, *Maṅkigītā*, *Bodhyagītā*, *Vicakhnugītā*, *Hārītagītā*, *Vṛtragītā*, *Parāśaragītā*, *Haṁsagītā*, *Anugītā*, and *Brāhmaṇagītā*. Another set of *Gītās*, according to him, is found in different Purāṇic literature. These are the *Īśvaragītā* (the *Kūrmapurāṇa*), *Vyāsagītā* (the *Kūrmapurāṇa*), *Rāmagītā*, *Gaṇeśagītā* (the *Gaṇeśapurāṇa*), *Śivagītā*, *Devīgītā* (the *Devībhāgavata*), *Kapilagītā* (the *Bhāgavatapūrāṇa*), *Aṣṭāvakraḡītā*, *Avadhūtagītā** (said to

equivalent to ‘*giti*’ (song-feminine) and means something that is sung,⁸²⁷ or more precisely, recited or taught. It qualifies the term ‘*upaniṣad*’ which is feminine in gender. So, it is called the *Bhagavadgītā Upaniṣad*.⁸²⁸ And, thus it means ‘the song sung by the divine’, i.e. in the present context ‘the song sung by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the highest God or an incarnation of the highest God’. It is to be noted that apart from Lord Kṛṣṇa, there are three other speakers in the text, viz. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Sañjaya and Arjuna, it is considered to be the speech of the Lord, as the major part of it is uttered by him only.⁸²⁹

It appears as a dialogue (*saṁvāda*) between Arjuna and Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhīṣmaparva* of the *Mahābhārata* covering eighteen chapters⁸³⁰ (twenty three to forty)

have been authored by Dattātreya), *Avadhūtagītā* (the *Bhāgavatapūrāṇa*), *Sūryagītā*, *Yamagītā* (the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*), *Yamagītā* (the *Nṛsiṃhapurāṇa*), *Yamagītā* (the *Agnipurāṇa*), *Haṁsagītā* (the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*), *Pāṇḍavagītā*, *Brahmagītā* (the *Skandapurāṇa*), *Brahmagītā* (the *Yogavāśiṣṭha*), *Siddhagītā* (the *Yogavāśiṣṭha*); and *Pitṛgītā*, *Agastyagītā*, *Rūdragītā* (all three in the *Varāhapurāṇa*) [Bhattacharjee 1926: pp. 537-46, 761-71]. *Considered to be anterior to the *BhG* (cf. Sitaramiah 1965: p. 241).

Besides the *Gītā*-s given by Bhattacharjee, V. Raghavan in his search for greater *Gītā* literature finds more of them in different *purāṇic* and philosophical literature. These are: the *Arjunagītā*, *Aśmakagītā*, *Ātmadarśanagītā*, *Uttaragītā* (the *Mahābhārata*), *Uddhavigītā* (the *Bhāgavata*), *Rbhugītā*, *Ailagītā* (the *Bhāgavata*), *Om̐kārāgītā*, *Kapilāgītā* (the *Padmapurāṇa*), *Dṛṣṭāntasāraṇakapilāgītā*, *Siddhāntasāraṇakapilāgītā* (the *Padmapurāṇa*), *Karmagītā*, *Kāvaṣeyagītā* (the *Brahmapurāṇa* ?), *Kāśīgītā* (the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*), *Kaulāgītā*, *Garbhagītā* (the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*), *Gurugītā* (the *Viśvasāratānta*), *Gurugītā* (the *Skandapurāṇa*), *Gorakṣanāthagītā*, *Dattagorakṣagītā*, *Janmagītā*, *Jīvanmuktigītā** (ascribed to Dattātreya), *Jñānagītā*, *Tattvagītā*, *Tattvasāragītā*, *Tulasīgītā*, *Devīgītā* (the *Kūrmapurāṇa*), *Dhīśagītā*, *Nāradaḡītā*, *Pitṛgītā* (the *Padmapurāṇa* ?), *Pr̥thivīgītā*, *Praṇavagītā* or *Prapannagītā*, *Bodhānandagītā*, the *Bhavānīśaṁkaragītā* (the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*), *Bhikṣugītā* (the *Bhāgavata*), *Bhṛgugītā*, *Mṛtyuñjayagītā*, *Yamagītā* (the *Skandapurāṇa*), the *Yājñavalkyagītā*, *Yogagītā*, *Rāgigītā*, *Rāsagītā*, *Rudragītā* (the *Bhāgavata*), *Rudragītā* (the *Bṛhatbrahmasaṁhitā*), *Laghugītā*, *Vasiṣṭhagītā* (the *Yogavāśiṣṭha*), *Viratagītā*, *Vedāntagītā*, *Vaiṣṇavagītā*, *Śaṁkaragītā* (the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*), *Śāntigītā*, *Śivarāmagītā*, *Śivaśaṁkaragītā*, *Śivottaragītā* (the *Harivaṁsapurāṇa*), *Śivauttaragītā*, *Śiṣṭagītā*, *Śrutigītā* (the *Bhāgavata*), *Ṣaḡḡagītā*, *Sadāśivagītā*, *Sanatkumāragītā*, *Siddhāntagītā* (the *Laghunārāyaṇopaniṣad*), *Sudarśanagītā* (the *Bṛhatbrahmasaṁhitā*), *Sūkṣmagītā*, *Sūtagītā* (the *Sūtasāṁhitā*), *Sūryagītā*, *Saumyagītā* (the *Padmapurāṇa*), *Haṁsagītā* (the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*); and *Veṇugītā*, *Gopīyugalagītā*, *Gopīkāgītā*, *Bhramaragītā* (all four in the *Bhāgavata*) [Raghavan 1938: pp. 86-122]. *Considered to be anterior to the *BhG* (cf. Sitaramiah 1965: p. 241).

⁸²⁷ In the strictest sense of the term the book is not meant for singing only. It also suggests to be read as is found in *BhG* 18.70.

⁸²⁸ Belvakkar 1925: p. 109.

The *Gītā* bears ample influence of the *Upaniṣads*. Even some of its verses are similar to those of the *Upaniṣads* (For detailed references, see Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 551, Sastrigal 1990).

⁸²⁹ Apte 1983: p. 1.

⁸³⁰ Though we find the commentators often naming the chapters differently in colophons, we are mentioning them according to Sripad Krishna Belvalkar; 1. *arjunaviṣādayoga* (‘*yoga*’ added, 47 verses), 2.

and running to seven hundred verses both in *anuṣṭubh*⁸³¹ (generally of thirty two syllables) and *trīṣṭubh* (of forty four syllables usually) metre of that section (*parvan*). The

sāṃkhyayoga (72 verses), 3. *karmayoga* (43 verses), 4. *brahmayajñāpraśaṃsāyoga* ('yoga' added, 42 verses), 5. *saṃnyāsayoga* (29 verses), 6. *dhyānayoga* (47 verses), 7. *jñānavijñānayoga* (30 verses), 8. *akṣarabrahmayoga* (28 verses), 9. *rājavidyārājaguhayoga* (34 verses), 10. *vibhūtiyoga* (42 verses), 11. *viśvarūpadarśanayoga* ('yoga' added, 55 verses), 12. *bhaktiyoga* (20 verses), 13. *kṣetrakṣetrajñayoga* (34 verses), 14. *guṇatrayavibhāgayoga* (27 verses), 15. *puruṣottamayoga* (20 verses), 16. *daivasurasampadvibhāgayoga* (24 verses), 17. *śraddhātrayavibhāgayoga* (28 verses), 18. *mokṣasaṃnyāsayoga* (78 verses) (total 700 verses) (*Bhagavadgītā* 1941b).

Despite the fact that we are not sure whether the authors always write these colophons, or they are written by the scribes of manuscripts or by the editors, we are mentioning below some variations in the naming of the chapters by three major earlier commentators, viz. Śaṃkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, and our author Madhusūdana.

Śaṃkara- *BhG* 2 '*sāṃkhyayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000); *BhG* 3 '*karmapraśaṃsāyoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 4 '*jñānakarmasaṃnyāsayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*brahmayajñāpraśaṃsāparanāmā jñānakarmasaṃnyāsayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000); *BhG* 5 '*karmasaṃnyāsayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*prakṛtigarbha*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000); *BhG* 6 '*ātmasaṃnyamayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), *BhG* 7 '*jñānavijñānayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 8 '*brahmākṣaranirdeśa*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 11 '*viśvarūpadarśanam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 12 '*bhaktiyoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 13 '*prakṛtipuruṣavivekayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*kṣetrakṣetrajñayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000); *BhG* 14 '*guṇatrayavibhāgayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 17 '*śraddhātrayavibhāgayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000); *BhG* 18 '*mokṣasaṃnyāsayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999).

Rāmānuja- *BhG* 2 '*sāṃkhyayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000); *BhG* 3 '*karmayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000); *BhG* 5 '*karmasaṃnyāsayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2000),

Madhva- no special name is found.

Madhusūdana- *BhG* 2 '*sarvagītārthasūtraṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 3 '*karmayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1912), '*jñānaniṣṭhāvarṇanam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 4 '*jñānakarmasaṃnyāsayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*brahmārpaṇayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 5 '*svasvarūpaparijñānam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1912) '*karmasaṃnyāsayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*svarūpaparijñānam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 6 '*ātmasaṃnyamayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*adhyātmayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 7 '*adhikāribhedenajñeyadheyapratipādyatattvabrahmanirūpaṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1912) '*jñānavijñānayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*adhikāribhedenajñānavijñānayoga jñeyadheyapratipādyatattvabrahmanirūpaṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 8 '*akṣaraparabrahmayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*adhikāribhedenākṣaravivaraṇa*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 9 '*adhikāribhedenarājavidyārājaguhayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1912); *BhG* 10 '*adhikāribhedenavibhūtiyoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1912); *BhG* 11 '*viśvarūpadarśananirūpaṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 12 '*bhaktiyogavivaraṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999); *BhG* 13 '*prakṛtipuruṣavivekayogavivaraṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*kṣetrakṣetrajñaviveka*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 14 '*guṇatrayavibhāgayogavivaraṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 1999), '*prakṛtiguṇatrayavibhāgayoga*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 17 '*śraddhātrayavibhāgayogavivaraṇam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001); *BhG* 18 '*saṃnyāsayogapratipādanam*' (*Bhagavadgītā* 2001).

⁸³¹ Arvind Sharma, in the course of a detailed discussion as to why the *Mahābhārata* is basically written in *anuṣṭubh* metre, finds that in spite of its common usage in the post-Vedic literature, this metre is hardly characterised in the entire Vedas. In order to account for it, Sharma offers both the possible modern-critical and traditional justifications. Modern scholars think that the *sūta*-s (bards-- a special caste having affinity with the warrior class) found this metre comfortable for recitation and oral composition. The traditional scriptural references substantiate that *anuṣṭubh* metre had a close association with the *śūdra*-s

text starts there with the straightforward announcement by the bard Sañjaya that Bhīṣma, the supreme commander of the Kauravas, has fallen at the battle being fought between two rival family groups --- the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas (*MBh* 6.14.3). But the usual form of the available *Gītā* begins with a dialogue between Sañjaya and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, where the latter enquired of the former about the happenings of the war. In fact, the entire *Gītā* is the narration of Sañjaya to Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*MBh* 6.23.1).⁸³² Before the great warriors of both sides were about to engage in war, they were making their presence felt by blowing conch-shells and showing their vigour and expertise. After seeing the relatives and friends on the opposite side, Arjuna (the hero of the Pāṇḍavas) became engulfed in sorrow and delusion and expressed his unwillingness to engage in war.⁸³³ Kṛṣṇa, the supreme Lord, who played the role of charioteer of Arjuna, advised him to discharge his own social duty (*svadharma*), i.e. to engage in the battle, the duty of the warrior class Arjuna was born in. Having imparted to him the true knowledge of the self in a manner of conversation, the Lord provoked him to fight in view of winning over the injustice the opponent (i.e. the Kauravas) symbolised.⁸³⁴

One of the principal teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* is that it does not ask the seekers to abstain from action, but to perform it towards good for all without having a desire for its fruit (*niskāma-karma*). It considers Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme *puruṣa*⁸³⁵ to whom the seekers are asked to surrender completely with utmost devotion. Thus,

who were denied the Vedic studies. Thus, Sharma thinks that the *Mahābhārata*, being a post-Vedic Hindu religious literature, unveils one of the main causes of its composition (Sharma 2000: pp. 225-78).

⁸³² *Mahābhārata* 1947.

⁸³³ T. M. P. Mahadevan rightly observed that the crisis Arjuna found is a common human state of affairs. It is the Lord who can rescue the human kind from it (Mahadevan 1976: p. 25).

⁸³⁴ Some scholars like Heinrich Zimmer etc. find the background of the *Gītā* as a war between two rival groups a paradox of its teaching. Zimmer thinks that a combination of thought held by the aboriginal Indians and the Aryan Vedic invaders materialised in the text (Zimmer 1951: p. 378).

⁸³⁵ Malinar 2007: p. 207.

throughout the text, the Lord taught Arjuna the means of attaining liberation (*mokṣa*), the supreme goal of human kind, among whom the means of devotion is pre-eminent.

However, though the *Gītā* is held in high esteem among the academics and religious followers, there is a lot of controversy regarding its date, authorship, textual formation, philosophy, relation to the *Mahābhārata*, and the ultimate message it conveys.⁸³⁶ Several volumes have been written on these points both by the occidental and oriental scholars for the last couple of centuries, and we will just mention them in order to get a general outlook of the text.

There are divergent views regarding the period when the text was originally composed. Among those who tried to date the text in an authentic manner, K. T. Telang deserves special mention. After a prolonged argumentation, Telang places it before the Āpastamba's *Dharmasūtra* and in the third century BCE.⁸³⁷ As Bühler mentions Āpastamba's *Dharmasūtra* falling between the fourth and fifth centuries BCE,⁸³⁸ we can conclude that the *Gītā* must belong at least to the fifth century BCE. On the basis of internal evidences in the text, W. Douglas P. Hill places it in the 2nd century BCE.⁸³⁹ Modern interpreters like Bal Gangadhar Tilak place it the 3rd century BCE.⁸⁴⁰ S. N. Dasgupta holds that some of the established views that the *Gītā* did not know the accepted doctrines of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the conception to identify Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa did not rise at the time of its composition, and the non-mention of the doctrine of personified forms (*vyūha*-s) in the text substantiate its origin in the pre-Buddhist time.⁸⁴¹ S. K. Belvalkar, in agreement with Telang, thinks that the *Gītā* was composed in

⁸³⁶ Khair 1981: p. 1.

⁸³⁷ Telang 1908: pp. 30 and 34.

⁸³⁸ Cf. Garbe (Utgikar 1918: pp. 29-30).

⁸³⁹ Hill 1928: p. 18.

⁸⁴⁰ See Patil 1959: p. 66.

⁸⁴¹ Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 549.

the interval between the end of the Upaniṣadic period and the commencement of Buddhism. Thus it does not have the slightest allusion to Buddhism.⁸⁴² On the other hand, K. N. Upadhyaya, though not finding any explicit mention of Buddhism in the *Gītā*, concludes with the support of early Buddhist texts such as the *Dhammapada* and the *Nikāya*-s that the *Gītā* bears ample indications of the influence of Buddhism, and that it also made use of Buddhist elements which suit its scheme.⁸⁴³ Going farther than Upadhyaya, T. G. Mainkar thinks that both the *Brahmasūtra*-s and the *Bhagavadgītā* are the product of post-Buddhist period, and the *Gītā* represents an age, when the concept of *saṃnyāsa* was being mistaken by the then Upaniṣadic, Sāṃkhya and Buddhist schools. Thus Mainkar holds that the *Gītā* borrowed clue from the rebellious Buddhism to modify the orthodox Hinduism. B. G. Tilak, a famous modern commentator on the *Gītā*, also finds parallelism between the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Pāli Buddhist works.⁸⁴⁴ Having found the influence of early Upaniṣads with the probable exception of the *Maitrī* and the early Buddhism in the *Gītā*, R. C. Zaehner dates it between the fifth and second centuries BCE.⁸⁴⁵ Dasgupta admits its high antiquity, keeping the view that the language of the text largely bears un-Pāṇinian (ca. 400 BCE) style.⁸⁴⁶ Richard Garbe holds that the genuine *Gītā* was composed at the beginning of the second century BCE and its revision took place later in the second century CE. The main argument he furnishes in support of his view is that Patañjali, the author of the *Yogasūtra*-s, who, according to him, also composed the *Mahābhāṣya*, seems to have been influenced by the technical original

⁸⁴² Belvalkar also mentions the term ‘*nirvāna*’ as referred to in the *Gītā* to be a pre-Buddhist technical term of ‘*kāla*’ philosophy (Belvalkar 1962: p. 156).

⁸⁴³ Upadhyaya 1968: pp. 163-73.

⁸⁴⁴ See Mainkar: 1977-78: p. 751.

⁸⁴⁵ Zaehner 1969: p. 7.

⁸⁴⁶ See Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 551.

sense of ‘yoga’ in the *Gītā* as ‘self-surrender’, ‘devotion’ etc.⁸⁴⁷ S. N. Dasgupta, having noticed the use of ‘yoga’ in the *Gītā* in multiple senses, also concludes that the author of the *Gītā* was not aware of the intent of ‘yoga’, i.e. the cessation of mental modifications (*cittavṛtti-nirodha*), as held by Patañjali.⁸⁴⁸ However, more recent attempts tend to bring its chronology down in time. J. L. Brockington has made a strong argument to place the text in the first century CE.⁸⁴⁹ Thus, no unanimous view can be found with respect to its time.

Like the controversial nature of its date, the authorship of the text is also debatable. Though the traditional notion to ascribe authorship to Vyāsa is well known, discrepancies in textual formation give rise to theories about its multiple authorships. On the basis of previous authoritative references like the Vedas, Sāṃkhya-Yogas etc. to the text, P. C. Divanji concludes that, it is Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vedavyāsa who composed the *Gītā*.⁸⁵⁰ On the other hand, Gajanan Shripat Khair, after an extensive search for the conflicting factors in the text, assigns triple authorship to it,⁸⁵¹ which was again questioned by Robert N. Minor. Minor thinks that like his predecessors such as Garbe, Otto etc., Khair also lacks objectivity.⁸⁵²

The textual formulation of the *Gītā* is also a matter of controversy. That it is not a part of the original *Mahābhārata*, and is rather an interpolation is held by many scholars like W. von Humboldt,⁸⁵³ E. W. Hopkins,⁸⁵⁴ Richard Garbe⁸⁵⁵ etc. Among different

⁸⁴⁷ Utgikar 1918: p. 33.

⁸⁴⁸ Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, pp. 443-51.

⁸⁴⁹ Brockington 1998.

⁸⁵⁰ Divanji 1946: 299-309.

⁸⁵¹ Khair 1969.

R. Motor Smith, however, not being satisfied with Khair’s approach, applies an elaborate statistical analysis of the text to find out its multiple authorships (Smith 1968: pp. 39-46).

⁸⁵² Khair 1982: pp. 29-42.

⁸⁵³ ‘The interpolations and additions can with great probability be conjectured even if one be not in the position to single them out’ (Garett 1846: p. 53).

recensions of the *Mahābhārata*, of which the *Bhagavadgītā* is a part, the Kashmiri recension deserves special mention. F. Otto Schrader in his *The Kashmir Recension of the Bhagavadgītā*⁸⁵⁶ claims that there are extra stanzas unknown to the common vulgate text of the *Gītā*.⁸⁵⁷ S. K. Belvalkar, however, after a thorough study of Schrader with reference to the vulgate text, proclaims all these variations to be of secondary nature, for they only justify some grammatical inaccuracies in the text. Belvalkar concludes that Schrader's contention is based on nothing but the variations of individual manuscripts, and the Kashmiri recension can no way be prior to the known vulgate text of Śaṅkara, which is still the oldest and most reliable version of the *Gītā*.⁸⁵⁸ As a review of Schrader's Kashmiri version of the *Gītā*, Franklin Edgerton declares it a sheer failure in formulating the authentic version of the *Gītā*. The vulgate text of the *Gītā*, according to Edgerton, carries more originality due to its satisfactory approach, as compared to the Kashmiri version of the *Mahābhārata*.⁸⁵⁹ Next to the Kashmiri recension, another old witness which could probably challenge the authenticity of vulgate text is the old Javanese version of the *Mahābhārata*, which cites only eighty and three/four stanzas of the *Gītā* (fifty six in the old Javanese paraphrase), and some extra verses as belonging to

⁸⁵⁴ 'Now this epic has had inserted into it a little poem which in origin is evidently a late Upaniṣad. It is nevertheless one of the earliest of the poems set in the frame of the epic. But it is by no means a poem in its original form. Both the beginning and the end are later additions' (Hopkins 1901: p. 145).

'This Divine Song (or Song of the Blessed One) is at present a Krishnaite version of an older Vishnuite poem, and this in turn was at first an unsectarian work, perhaps a late Upanishad' (Hopkins 1895: p. 389).

⁸⁵⁵ Utgikar 1918: pp. 1-35.

⁸⁵⁶ Schrader 1930.

⁸⁵⁷ 'F. Otto Schrader...puts forth the view that these Kashmirian sources, with their "fourteen additional stanzas and four half-stanzas unknown to the Vulgate, as well as the 282 exclusively Kashmirian *varietas lectiones*", preserve a more authentic, and even an intrinsically superior text of the BG, which, he claims, was pre-Śaṅkara' (quoted in *Bhagavadgītā* 1968: Editorial note, p. XVI).

⁸⁵⁸ Belvalkar 1939: pp. 211-51.

⁸⁵⁹ Edgerton 1932: p. 75.

In reply to Edgerton's criticism Schrader shows that the vulgate text of the *Gītā* cannot be an authentic version of the Kashmirian *Mahābhārata*. In support of his view, Schrader quotes the *Bhāratamañjarī*, a metrical paraphrase of the *Mahābhārata* by Kṣemarāja, which differs from the known vulgate version. Thus Schrader concludes that Kṣemarāja, while explaining the essence of the *Mahābhārata*, followed the Kashmirian version of the *Gītā*, and not the vulgate text (Schrader 1935: p. 147).

the text. However, Belvalkar, after critically examining this version, opines that it is not of much help in formulating the current text of the *Gītā*.⁸⁶⁰

However, Dasgupta entertains the possibility that the text, being a work of the Bhāgavata school, was composed before the *Mahābhārata* in accordance with the *Bhārata* tale, on which the present *Mahābhārata* is said to be based, and during one of its later revision, the text of the *Gītā* was inserted therein.⁸⁶¹ K. T. Telang too does not reject the possibility of such an insertion.⁸⁶² On the other hand, scholars like G. A. Feuerstein etc. are of the opinion that to view the text of the *Gītā* as independent to the *Mahābhārata* is a fallacious approach.⁸⁶³ Feuerstein argues that ample references of the text are scattered throughout the epic. Moreover, its usage of language, expressions and thought are similar to those of the Epic *Mahābhārata*.

The attempt at maintaining the textual purity of the *Gītā* against all interpolations⁸⁶⁴ can be evidenced in the epic text *Mahābhārata* itself. In the forty third chapter of the *Bhīṣmaparva*, it has been said that there are seven hundred forty five verses in the *Gītā* of which Keśava or Lord Kṛṣṇa uttered six hundred and twenty verses, Arjuna fifty seven, Sañjaya sixty seven, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra one respectively.⁸⁶⁵ As the *Gītā* containing of seven hundred verses (Dhṛtarāṣṭra one, Sañjaya forty one, Arjuna eighty four, Lord Kṛṣṇa five hundred and seventy four) is written both in *anuṣṭubh* and *triṣṭubh* metre, Pandit R. M. Shastri holds that the evaluation of *triṣṭubh* verses in terms of

⁸⁶⁰ *Bhagavadgītā* 1968: Editorial note, pp. xxiv-xxxiv.

⁸⁶¹ Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 552.

⁸⁶² Telang 1908: pp. 5-6.

⁸⁶³ ‘... to isolate the *Gītā* and treat it as a distinct textual entity, independent of the main body of the epic, is a fallacious undertaking’ (Feuerstein 1974: p. 57).

⁸⁶⁴ J. A. B. van Buitenen of course finds the Kashmiri transmission closer to the original version of the *Mahābhārata*, though it is difficult to find out the authentic version of the revised epic (Buitenen 1965: p. 109).

⁸⁶⁵ Dutt 2006: p. 115 and *Bhagavadgītā* 1968: Critical notes, p. 77.

For details regarding the contradiction of verse number, see Schrader 1938: pp. 62-68. Again, for Belvalkar’s criticism of Schrader and others’ views, see Belvalkar 1939a, 1943.

anuṣṭubh verses leads us nearer to seven hundred and forty five verses and thus resolves the controversy.⁸⁶⁶ Recently, Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya has shed a new light on this age-old problem concerning the formation and historical background of the *Bhagavadgītā*, and finds it appropriate that the original *Bhagavadgītā* has extra stanzas, that is, it has seven hundred forty five verses in eighteen chapters compared to the commonly available version of the *Bhagavadgītā* that has seven hundred verses in eighteen chapters.⁸⁶⁷

Though the *Bhagavadgītā* is considered to be one of the foundational sources of Hindu philosophy, it can not be treated as a system of philosophy proper due to its lack of tidy structure. It is more an ethico-religious text than a philosophical one.⁸⁶⁸ In order to show its popularity as a religio-philosophical poem, William von Humboldt says; ‘the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue’.⁸⁶⁹ However, the content of the text gives the fullest expression of the

⁸⁶⁶ Shastri 1936: pp. 67-82.

As a review of Shastri’s stand regarding the computation of the *Gītā* text, S. N. Tadpatrikar finds him misleading and expresses his acceptance of the extra verses (Tadpatrikar 1937: pp. 357-60).

Though the Poona critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*, thinking them as later insertions, does not place these five and half verses which indicate seven hundred and forty five verses of the text at the beginning of chapter forty three of the *Bhīṣmaparva* (*Bhagavadgītā* 1968: p. 77), we find them mentioned by Nīlakaṇṭha, the famous commentator of the *Mahābhārata*, that these verses are not cited in the *gauḍa* version (cited by Pandit R. M. Shastri, Shastri 1936: p. 67). However, they are available in many other editions like Dutt etc. (Dutt 2006: p. 115).

⁸⁶⁷ Bhattacharya 2014.

⁸⁶⁸ Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. vii.

⁸⁶⁹ Quoted in Radhakrishnan 1999: p. 519.

V. K. Rajwade, arguing against the point that it is one of the best philosophical poems of the world, quotes the authorities of poetics from both Sanskrit tradition and the European writers, and shows as to how the *Gītā* does not follow either of them violating grammatical norms and lacking poetical style (Rajwade 1917: pp. 325-38). P. K. Gode having shown the comparisons or similes in the verses of the text opines that those comparisons are far from giving any literary creative pleasure but the introspection of the eternal problems the human kind faces (Gode 1920-21: pp. 135-42). On the other hand, as a review of Rajwade’s contention B. N. Krishnamurti Sarma rejects him outright with the support of old *Gītā* commentators who have dealt the verses in minute detail. He says that the *Bhagavadgītā*, being a part of the great epic *Mahābhārata*, precedes all known grammatical rules, and possesses epical qualities of its own. Sarma also holds that no comparison with European poetics can be made with it as both of them are rooted in different backgrounds (Sarma 1930: pp. 284-99).

monotheistic idea of the *R̥gveda* and the Upaniṣads, which is found in its different verses.⁸⁷⁰ Despite different views regarding the central teaching of the *Gītā*, Ratna Shivaram holds that there are two basic principles -- metaphysical and ethical, dealing with what God is, and what man should do respectively, run throughout the text.⁸⁷¹ C. Kunhan Raja, having found out the implication of *karma* held by the Mīmāṃsākas in the *Gītā* view of *karma*, thinks that the latter reflects the former in doctrinal aspects.⁸⁷² Following Raja, Arvind Sharma holds that there is no natural basis to consider the *Gītā* to be a Vedāntic text only, as there are ample room for a Mīmāṃsīc approach to this text.⁸⁷³

Against the views of Indian scholars who believe that the teaching of the *Gītā* is a means to liberation; and western scholars who think the text of having undergone at least two revisions -- thus resulting in inconsistencies and interpolations, rather than any particular philosophical system, P. M. Modi maintains that no single philosophical system was aimed at either in the whole text or in a particular chapter of it. The principal philosophical thesis of the *Gītā*, according to him, is the doctrine of ‘*yoga*’ or ‘disinterested action’ (*niṣkāma-karma*). In the *Gītā*, some established philosophical views are represented as long as they support its purpose.⁸⁷⁴ S. N. Tadpatrikar concludes that the main teaching of the *Gītā* is to impart the truth of human life and all other approaches are subsidiary to this objective.⁸⁷⁵ Though the *Bhagavadgītā* does not refer to the Pāñcarātra tradition by name, scholars like Prabhakar Apte, T. G. Mainkar etc. hold that some of the points like acceptance of Lord Vāsudeva as the supreme divinity and

⁸⁷⁰ Yamunacharya 1945: pp. 119-24.

⁸⁷¹ Shivaram 1946: p. 23.

⁸⁷² Kunhan Raja 1946: pp. 9-22.

⁸⁷³ Sinha 1995: pp. 186-95.

⁸⁷⁴ Modi 1950-51: pp. 39-42.

⁸⁷⁵ Tadpatrikar 1946: p. 36.

devotion to him as the means to liberation etc. show adherence to the latter by the former.⁸⁷⁶ M. K. Deshpande thinks, in spite of the presence of lofty philosophical thought in the Upaniṣads, they are not of much help to the common people in meeting the difficulties they face in everyday life, and so they need an optimistic philosophy of life which suits them and helps them to approach a personal God. Deshpande maintains that the *Gītā* helps people fulfil these needs in a greater way.⁸⁷⁷ On finding the implicit presence of Sāṃkhyaite metaphysics throughout and its allegiance to the transcendental-immanent theistic notion rather than to a pantheistic view with the declaration of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the last resort, David White concludes that the text *Gītā* tries to synthesise proto-Sāṃkhya and the Upaniṣadic aspect of non-duality.⁸⁷⁸ However, S. N. Dasgupta thinks that the text belongs to the Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra school, and the inner analysis of it shows that the *Gītā* accepts neither the established Sāṃkhya nor the Vedānta, but characterises a combination of an earlier school of Sāṃkhya and the Vedāntic ideas dissimilar to those of Śaṃkara.⁸⁷⁹ P. K. Gode in a detailed study of parallelism between the *Gītā* and the *Bhaktisūtra*-s of Nārada shows as to how the latter is influenced by the former in terms of doctrinal considerations, and concludes that the *Gītā* precedes the *Śāṇḍilyasūtra*-s, which again precede the *Bhaktisūtra*-s of Nārada.⁸⁸⁰

Following Jadunath Sinha, we can sum up its teaching by saying that ‘it advocates dualistic monism, preaches the cult of Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa, and enjoins works (*karma-yoga*), devotion (*bhakti-yoga*) and knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*) for the attainment of

⁸⁷⁶ Apte 1972: pp. 200-3, Mainkar 1977-78: p. 752.

⁸⁷⁷ Deshpande 1977-78: pp. 23-4.

S. N. Dasgupta also thinks that, in spite of acceptance of many Upaniṣadic ideas, inclination towards personal God makes the *Gītā* prominently differ from the Upaniṣads (Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 530).

⁸⁷⁸ White 1979: pp. 501-7.

⁸⁷⁹ Dasgupta 2000-07: Vol. II, p. 550.

⁸⁸⁰ Gode 1923: pp. 63-95.

God'.⁸⁸¹ Nonetheless, in spite of all these controversies regarding the *Gītā*, we find its universal appeal to be pre-eminent. In the words of S. K. De: 'While philosophers of diverse schools interpret it in accordance with their own conceptions, and critical scholars quarrel over the question of its consistency, its deep ethical and religious fervour lifts it above sectarian and scholastic considerations and supply nourishment to devout minds as a gospel of deliverance'.⁸⁸² So, the divergent attitudes to the text give rise to its different interpretations.

⁸⁸¹ Sinha 1999: p. 206 (italics supplied).

⁸⁸² De 1942-3: p. 21.

Appendix II

A brief note on the probable place of origin of Madhusūdana and the influence of Caitanyite movement on him

In order to evaluate the view of a philosopher, it is helpful to know the socio cultural background in which that particular thinker was born and developed his speculations. Since making a detailed study on this point is out of the purview of this dissertation, we have just referred to MS's time and place of birth based on the views of the majority of scholars. However, with the acceptance of a common view on his period of advent, as we have pointed out (in chapter 1.2), we must speculate on his place of origin, as scholars are not unanimous about this point too. It is commonly believed that MS hails from Bengal and was a junior contemporary of Śrīcaitanya (1486-1533 CE) as is evident both in numerous legends and the supports of the exponents of Gauḍīya or Bengal Vaiṣṇavism in later period. In support of this view, the following points have been considered by scholars such as i) the family lineage, ii) hagiographical details, iii) MS's own reference to a disciple, viz. Baladeva Bhaṭṭācārya, [the surname, i.e. Bhaṭṭācārya, which this disciple carries, is a common surname in Bengal], iv) other factors like reference to the Lord of Blue Mountain (i.e. Nīlācala-nāyaka or Nīlācala-nātha) etc. who is treated as Lord Jagannātha (a tutelary deity for many inhabitants of Bengal that time) of Puri,⁸⁸³ the place that belongs to the eastern part of India of which the then Bengal or Gauḍa was a part, v) support of intellectual or rather socio-religious (such as finding similarity with Caitanya tradition's way of treating ecstatic devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa) and institutional (such as efforts to preserve relics and memorials in MS's birth place) milieu of his time,

⁸⁸³ We have discussed earlier that references to nos. iii and iv are cited in the *SB* of MS.

If his Bengali origin is accepted, then it should be probable that MS was influenced by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and that the socio-cultural movement initiated by the mystic saint Śrīcaitanya and later continued by his followers might have influenced MS's thought. But while some of the later exponents of Gauḍīya or Bengal Vaiṣṇavism have made use of the comments of Madhusūdana's *Gītā* in support of their respective positions in their comments on the *Gītā*, none of the earlier proponents of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is referred to by MS in his work and vice versa. Besides, MS does not explicitly discuss the philosophical views of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in any of his works.

In one of the legends it goes that MS perplexed the famous logicians of Navadvīpa in Bengal, namely Mathurānātha Tarkavāgīśa (1550 CE) and Gadādhara Bhaṭṭācārya (1604-1708 CE) during his visit there: 'When Madhusūdana Vākpati (Sarasvatī) visited Navadvīpa, Tarkavāgīśa was trembling in fear and Gadādhara got confused'.⁸⁸⁴ Thus, despite their dissimilarities in principles with those of MS, the fact that the *GD* of MS is referred to by Viśvanātha Cakravartin and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, the two eminent advocates of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavism (in the 18th century CE), in their respective commentaries on the *BhG*, is noteworthy. On *BhG* 3.1, Viśvanātha, like MS,

⁸⁸⁴ *navadvīpe samāyāte madhusūdanavākpatau / cakampe tarkavāgīśaḥ kātaro'bhūd gadādharaḥ* // This incident relates to the fact that MS, having left home (i.e. Unasiyā village in Koṭālipāḍā, a suburb of Faridpur district in East Bengal or present Bangladesh) in childhood, proceeded to Navadvīpa to study Nyāya and then to Benares to study Vedānta. It is during his visit to Navadvīpa much later from Banaras that the scholars of Nyāya in Navadvīpa got frightened of MS's scholarship. To highlight this point with more subtlety, we could mention that Phaṇibhūṣaṇa Tarkavāgīśa (a famous Naiyāyika from Bengal in 20th century CE) used to hold: 'When Madhusūdana Paṇḍita visited (Navadvīpa) from Mathura Jagadīśa Tarkālaṅkāra (1500-1600 CE) became bashful and Gadādhara left his conceit' (*mathurāyāḥ samāyāte madhusūdanapaṇḍite / anīśo jagadīśo'bhūt na jagarjja gadādharaḥ* //). However, D. C. Bhattacharya in his treatise on the history of learning neo-logic (Navya-nyāya) in Bengal, refers to one logician Madhusūdana Vācaspati, who, according to him, visited Navadvīpa from Mithilā and perplexed Govinda Nyāyavāgīśa and Gadādhara. The verse quoted by him reads as *mithilātaḥ samāyate madhusūdanagīspatau / cakampe nyāyavāgīśaḥ kātaro'bhūdgadhādharaḥ* //, its source being an old manuscript in Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad. Bhattacharya also holds that our author MS precedes Gadādhara by one hundred years or so and that there is no proof that MS studied either in Navadvīpa or Mithilā, thereby professing that MS is different from Madhusūdana Vācaspati. All this account thus does not lead one to gaining any conclusive evidence of the place of origin of MS (Ghoṣa 1931: *Advaitasiddhibhūmikā*, pp. 92-96; Modi 1985: Introduction, p. 2; Bhattacharya 1952: p. 144).

explains the term ‘*keśava*’ as meaning ‘*ka*’ as ‘*Brahmā*’, ‘*īśa*’ as ‘*Śiva*’, and ‘*va*’ as ‘controller of both of them’. Śrīcaitanya’s monastic teacher (*dīkṣā-guru*) Īśvara Purī too seems to belong to the order of *daśanāmī-sampradāya* initiated by Śaṅkara, as the title ‘*purī*’ is one of the ten titles used for the saints belonging to this order. Some hagiographical sources claim that MS was a Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava first and accepted Advaitic monastic orders later, in order to preach *bhakti* to the followers of the latter tradition. Further, we find that the concept of *jīvanmukti*, a prominent component of Advaita doctrines, is also accepted by Baladeva in his commentary on *BhG* 2.69-71, in almost a similar manner. Baladeva maintains that, although controlling the senses appears to be hard while undergoing spiritual discipline, it becomes natural for a *sthita-prajña* once he reaches his goal. Baladeva characterizes this person as one who is content with the bliss of his own self and unaffected by the results of *prārabdha-karma*-s, just as rivers cannot change the course of action of the ocean, though they mingle with it during the rainy season. The *sthita-prajña* maintains his body just for its bare necessity, without having any sense of possessiveness and egoism.⁸⁸⁵ Viśvanātha also quotes Gauḍapāda in his comments on *BhG* 6.20-23, while his comments on *BhG* 15.18 note MS’s explanation that eulogizes Lord Kṛṣṇa, with approbation. This is an admission that Viśvanātha has no objection to the non-dualistic interpretation of these verses equating Lord Kṛṣṇa as the supreme *brahman*.⁸⁸⁶ These points show that the exponents of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism are not always antithetical to the interpretations provided by MS, though they disagree with the basic principles of Advaita Vedānta. Again, though due to paucity of place we do not have enough scope to deal with them, we find that the commentaries on the *BP* by

⁸⁸⁵ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not known): *Gītābhūṣaṇa*, pp. 81-3.

⁸⁸⁶ *Bhagavadgītā* (date not known): *Sārāthavarṣiṇi*, pp. 175 and 404.

Viśvanātha and Jīva Gosvāmin (16th century CE) are sometimes compatible with the teaching of Advaita Vedānta.

There is a minor body of opinion that MS belonged to the south rather than Bengal.⁸⁸⁷ In the case of authors who belong to any of the monastic orders in India, it is almost impossible to find definite data about their genealogy and place of birth because once they enter such a monastic order, they virtually obliterate all data pertaining to their pre-monastic life. While it is not possible to arrive at any definite conclusion regarding the place of origin of MS with the currently available data, the view that MS hails from Bengal gets precedence while we take into consideration the nitty-gritty of his various works in the light of socio-religious scenario of Bengal and the observations of modern scholars in this regard. If his Bengali origin is proved convincingly, it will lead to better understanding of his philosophy, if one agrees with the scholars who describe him as belonging to the post-Caitanya period.

⁸⁸⁷ The reasons for this view are that i) ‘Sarasvatī’ which is one of the ten titles for monks of the Śaṅkara school, known as *daśanāmī-sampradaya*, is generally assigned to the Śṛṅgerī Mutt in south India (Vāsudevānanda 2006: pp. 1198-9) and that some Śṛṅgerī records talk about one Madhusūdana Bhārati Svāmī as occupying the place of pontiff there around the 13th century CE (Telang 1886: pp. 368, 373-4 and *Siddhāntabindu* 1989: Introduction, p. 8), ii) MS was mainly preoccupied with rebutting the views of the Mādhva and Rāmānuja schools that flourished in south India, where the former was the bitterest critic of Advaita Vedānta, and against whose works MS composed his *magnum opus AdS*, iii) Lord Kṛṣṇa, especially Lord Gopāla (i.e. Lord Kṛṣṇa as a child), for whom MS has great fascination, is worshipped mainly in Udupi Mutt in Karnataka established by the Mādhva school and in Guruvayur temple in Kerala, iv) there has been a tradition that there are a number of Brahmin families settled near Kaladi in Kerala, who are known as Gauḍa Sārasvata Brahmins and are believed to have been migrated to Kerala from Gauḍa-deśa (i.e. the then Bengal) many generations ago, and that Gauḍa Brahmānanda Sarasvatī, a fellow commentator of MS might have belonged to this Sārasvata Brahmin community (Rajagopalan 2003: pp. 255-7), and v) the origin of the BP and Vaiṣṇava devotional movement, to which MS had great attachment, is generally held to have been rooted in south India.

Appendix III

A list of different readings of the *Bhagvadgīta* mentioned by Madhusūdana

<i>Bhagavadgītā</i>	Madhusūdana
1.8, 'saumadattistathaiva ca'	'sindhurājastathaiva ca'
1.46, 'kṣemataram'	'priyataram'
6.9, 'samabuddhirviśiṣyate'	'samabuddhirvimucyate'
8.16, 'ābrahmabhūvanāḷlokāḥ'	'ābrahmabhavanāḷlokāḥ'
9.21, 'traidharma'	'trayīdharmam'
11.8, 'śakyase'	'śakhyase'
11.21, 'amī hi tvāṃ surasaṅgā viśanti'	'amī hi tvāo' surasaṅgā viśanti'
11.17, 'durnirīkṣam'	'durnirīkṣyam'
11.28, 'vatrāṇyabhitojvalanti'	'vaktrāṇyabhivijvalanti'
11.37, 'sadasattatparam yat'	'sadasattatparam ca yat'
11.40, 'namaḥ purastāt'	'namaḥ puraḥ stāt'
11.41, 'tavedam'	'tavemam'
13.20, 'kāryakāraṇakartṛtve'	'kāryakāraṇakartṛtve' (Śaṅkara too)
14.23, 'yo'vatiṣṭhati'	'yo'vatiṣṭhate' or 'yonutiṣṭhati' (Śaṅkara too)
14.25, 'mānāpamānayostulyastulya'	'mānāvamānayostulyastulya'
15.5, 'sukhaduḥkhasaṃjñaiḥ'	'sukhaduḥkhasaṅgaiḥ'

Appendix IV

Index of *Bhagvadgītā* verses where the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā* refers to other commentators of the *Bhagavadgītā*

Śaṃkara (commentary on the *BhG*): Introductory verse 1 of the *GD*; *BhG* 2.25, 2.27, 2.41, 2.48, 2.56, 3.2, 3.20, 3.34, 4.6, 4.18, 4.21, 4.24, 6.14, 6.29, 6.34, 13.2, 13.12, 17.10, 17.16, 17.28, 18.6, 18.12, 18.14, 18.37, 18.66, 18.67, 18.75; concluding verse 3 of the *GD*.

Śaṃkara (commentary on the *BS* and the Upaniṣads): *BhG* 2.17, 2.18, 3.34, 4.34, 4.37, 8.24, 18.12.

Ānandagiri: *BhG* 4.6, 18.75.

Śrīdhara Svāmin: *BhG* 2.41, 5.7, 6.27 (only place where Śrīdhara is referred to by name by Madhusūdana), 13.12, 15.16, 17.10, 18.12.

Rāmānuja: *BhG* 4.6, 5.7, 13.12.

Madhva: *BhG* 18.21.

Jaya Tīrtha: *BhG* 13.12.

Appendix V

Index of *Bhagavadgītā* verses where other commentators of the *Bhagavadgītā* refer to

the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

Brahmānandagiri of Veṅkaṭanātha: *BhG* 1.27, 2.8, 2.11, 2.13, 2.16, 2.18, 2.31, 3.28, 4.10, 5.8, 8.1.

Śrīmadbhavadgītārthaprakāśa of Nīlakaṇṭha Sūri: Introductory verses 2, 3, 5; *BhG* 2.20, 3.28 (only place where MS is referred to by name by Nīlakaṇṭha), 4.18, 6.29, 10.6, 10.21, 17.6, 18.10, 18.25

Tattvadīpikā of Vallabhācārya (fifth grand son of Vallabhācārya, the proponent of Śuddhādvaita school): *BhG* 7.16.

Amṛtatarāṅginī of Puruṣottamajī: Introduction.

Sārārthavarṣiṇī of Viśvanātha Cakravartin: Introduction, *BhG* 4.6, 4.7, 4.9, 4.36, 7.7, 7.16, 8.18, 9.15, 13.10, 14.26-27, 15.18.

Gītābhūṣaṇa of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa: *BhG* 1.1, 4.6, 7.14, 7.16.

Bhāṣyotkarṣadīpikā of Dhanapati Sūri: *BhG* 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.12, 1.15, 1.16, 1.18, 1.21, 1.24, 1.25, 1.31, 1.32, 1.35, 1.36, 1.40, 1.41, 1.45, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 2.15, 2.16, 2.17, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.24, 2.27, 2.29, 2.31, 2.39, 2.44, 2.54, 2.55, 2.56, 2.67, 2.70, 2.71, 2.72, 3.3, 3.9, 3.13, 3.18, 3.20, 3.24, 3.28, 3.30, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.10, 4.13, 4.18, 4.20, 4.24, 4.26, 4.28, 4.33, 4.34, 4.41, 5.3, 5.7, 5.9, 5.13, 5.15, 5.23, 6.5, 6.7, 6.19, 6.23, 6.29, 6.30, 7.2, 7.4, 7.7, 7.20, 7.21, 7.29, 8.5, 8.6, 8.20, 8.24, 9.14, 9.15, 9.18, 9.21, 9.28, 9.32, 10.7, 10.12, 10.21, 11.40, 12.1, 12.13, 13.3, 13.4, 13.8, 13.17, 13.18, 14.8, 14.9, 14.27, 15.1, 15.6, 15.7, 16.1, 16.3, 17.6, 17.16, 17.20, 18.9, 18.17, 18.19, 18.21, 18.30, 18.34, 18.36, 18.55 (implicit indication).

Appendix VI

A list of variants in different editions of the *Gūḍhārthadīpikā*

Paṇṣīkar edition	Lallurama Shastri edition	Ānandaśrama edition
Page no. (Paṇṣīkar edition)		
1, ‘pratyakṣaram’	‘pratipadam’	-----
2, ‘tadrūpāṣṭādaśādhyāyairgītā’	‘tadrūpāṣṭādaśādhyāyīgītā’	-----
4, ‘natvāgāmīni’	-----	‘nacā’ oogāmīni’
7, ‘anādibhavasantānanirūḍham’	‘anādibhavasantānani (rū) gūḍham’	-----
103, ‘kṛtāni karmāṇi jñānopayoginīm’	‘kṛtāni jñānopayoginīm’	-----
130, ‘natu taccittam vikartum śaknuvanti’	‘natu vikartum śaknuvanti’	-----
132, ‘sūcayannupasaṃharati’	‘stuvannupasaṃharati’	-----
147, ‘śrutyeha vihito’	-----	‘śrutyā’ bhi-dhiyate’
176, ‘tathāpyāpātasukhahetutvādūpādeyaḥ’	‘tathā’ pyātataḥsukhahetutvādūpādeyaḥ’	-----
178, ‘vijñānamaparokṣam’	‘vijñānamaparokṣam tatphalam taylorjñānavijñānayoh’	-----
272, ‘tatrāśeṣasaṃsāranidānam’	‘tasyā viśeṣaḥ saṃsāranidānam’	-----
275, ‘kalpitābhāvasyādhiṣṭhānātmatvāt’	--- ‘kalpitābhāvasyādhiṣṭhānātmatvāt’	-----
303, ‘nacātinidrāśīlasyātijāgrataśca’	‘tathā’ otinidrāśīlasyātijāgrataśca’	-----
304, ‘sarvaśūnyatāmāpāditam’	‘sarvavṛttiśūnyatāmāpāditam’	-----
305, ‘anātmoparakte’	‘anātmānuparakte’	-----
313, ‘savātapradīpavallayābhīmukharūpam’	‘savātapradīpavat layābhīmukhyarūpam’	-----
322, ‘atastattvajñānamanonāśavāsanākṣayāṇām yathākramamabhyāsāya’	‘atastattvajñānamanonāśavāsanākṣayāṇāma- kramamabhyāsāya’	-----
323, ‘karmāṇi sarvakāmatvam’	‘karmāṇyasarvakāmatvam’	-----
323, ‘svasvadeśācārakuladharmā- svabhāvabhedatadgatāpaśabdastu’	‘svasvadeśācārakuladharmā- svabhāvabhedatadgatāpaśabdastu’	-----
327, ‘vāsanāparityāgārtham ca vairāgyeṇa ceti dvayamevoktam’	‘vāsanāparityāgārtham ca vairāgyamiti ...dvayamevoktam’	-----
330, ‘kṛtakaratvātsarvāṇi’	‘kṛtakāryatvātsarvāṇi’	-----
333, ‘śraddhāvitto, sarvakraturūpatvam’	‘śraddhānvito, sarvasukṛtarūpatvam’	-----
346, ‘bhāvyate svato’	‘dhāryate svato’	-----
349, ‘māyāpyahamebopādānam’	‘māyāvyahamevopādānam’	-----
351, ‘madiva, mayā yat kalpate’	‘sativa, māyāmayāya kalpate’	-----
354, ‘tadākāraṇaṃ rajastamovirahitam’	‘tadākāraṇam rajastamovirahitam’	-----
363, ‘rādhanaṃ pūjanamīhate’	‘rādhanaṃārādhanaṃ pūjanamīhate’	-----
369, ‘māmīśvaretvenābhīmatam’	‘māmanīśvaretvenābhīmatam’	-----

370, 'nikhilalokaduḥkhanistārāya tayā'omadbhakto'	'nikhilalokaduḥkhanistārāya tayā'omabhakto'	-----
371, 'manmāyāmohitaḥ'	'tanmāyāmohitaḥ'	-----
413, 'paramārthasattāsadrūpeṇa'	'paramārthasatā sadrūpeṇa'	-----
424, 'bādhaśaṅkāpanodakakutarkānusandhāna'	'bādhaśaṅkāpanodakatarkānusandhāna'	-----
425, 'ca paramasādhanam'	'caramasādhanam'	-----
460, 'durdurūḍhavadā iti nirākaraṇena'	'durdurūḍhavadānirākaraṇena'	-----
507, 'naraśiṃhatvādirūpaṃ'	'naraśiṃharāghavadirūpaṃ'	-----
517, 'adveṣṭetyādinā'okṣaropāsakādīnām saṃnyāsinām lakṣaṇabhūtam'	'adveṣṭetyādinā'okṣaropāsakādīnām jīvamuktānām saṃnyāsinām lakṣaṇabhūtam'	-----
521, 'kāliṇḍipulinodare'	'kāliṇḍipulineṣu'	-----
524, 'pāramarthaikaṃ rūpamādāya paramātmanaiikyamāha'	'pāramārthikaṃ tattvamasamśāripāramātmanaiikyamāha'	-----
525, 'saṃsāradharmamāvidyaka'	'saṃsāradharma- kṣetrajñamāvidyaka'	'saṃsāradharmaṃ kṣetrajñamāvidyaka'
540, 'dharmaśāstrapratipādyatvamuktam'	'yogaśāstrapratipādyatvamuktam'	-----
541, 'brahmasūtrāṇi ca tāni'	'brahmasūtrāṇi tāni'	-----
548, 'viśayabhogalampaṭopadeśakānām'	'viśayabhogalampaṭatopadeśakānām'	-----
559, 'tadatyantavyavahitameva'	'tadatyavyavahitameva'	-----
569, 'dṛṣṭeṣu madhye'	'dṛṣṭeṣu madhye'	'draṣṭeṣu madhye'
585, 'padārthātmavastusvarūpaṃ'	'paramārthātmavastusvarūpaṃ'	-----
637, 'prājāpātyāḥ tam sprdhire'	'prājāpātyāḥ pasprdhire'	-----
639, 'sauhārdamavadhārāya'	'hānāthamavadhārāya'	-----
667, 'ekavacanāyavayavamekaṃ'	'ekavacanātrayavayavamekaṃ'	-----
670, 'śraddhānasyaiva'	'śraddhānatayaiva'	-----
675, 'nityasya nityena nityavihitena'	'nityasya nityehitena'	-----
770, 'sarvapratiḥbandhakaśūnyenātmañānena'	'sarvapratiḥbandhaśūnyenātmañānena'	-----

*1, 'oṃ namaḥ paramahaṃsāsvādita...śrīrāmacandrāyaya'

(Ānandāśrama edition lacks this invocatory verse).

*498, 'dṛṣṭaḥ karmabhūtaṃ hi...bhaje tam' (Lallurama Shastri and Ānandāśrama editions lack this saṃgraha śloka).

*507, 'paramakāruṇikaṃ...varāhādirūpaṃ vā' (it is missing in Lallurama Shastri and Ānandāśrama editions).

*519, 'sambhavāttato...bhaje'oham' (this saṃgraha śloka lacks in Lallurama Shastri and Ānandāśrama editions).

Besides the above variants, there are number of typographical errors and minor different readings in the above-mentioned editions.